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Adventure

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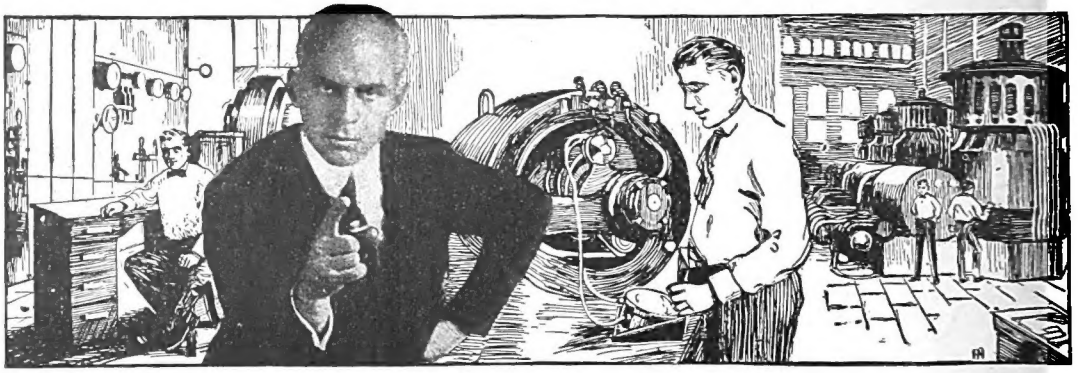

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ADVENTURE
July 30th, 1922

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Volume 35
Number 6

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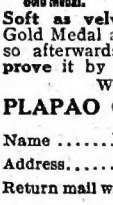

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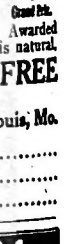

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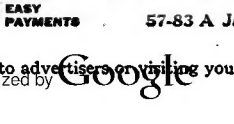

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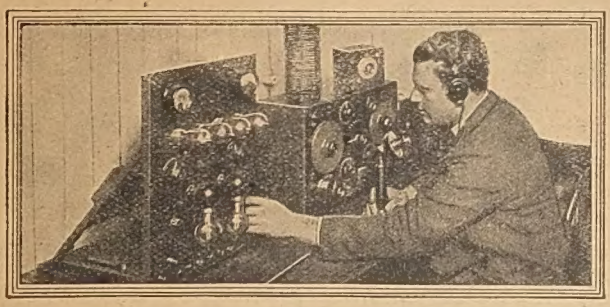

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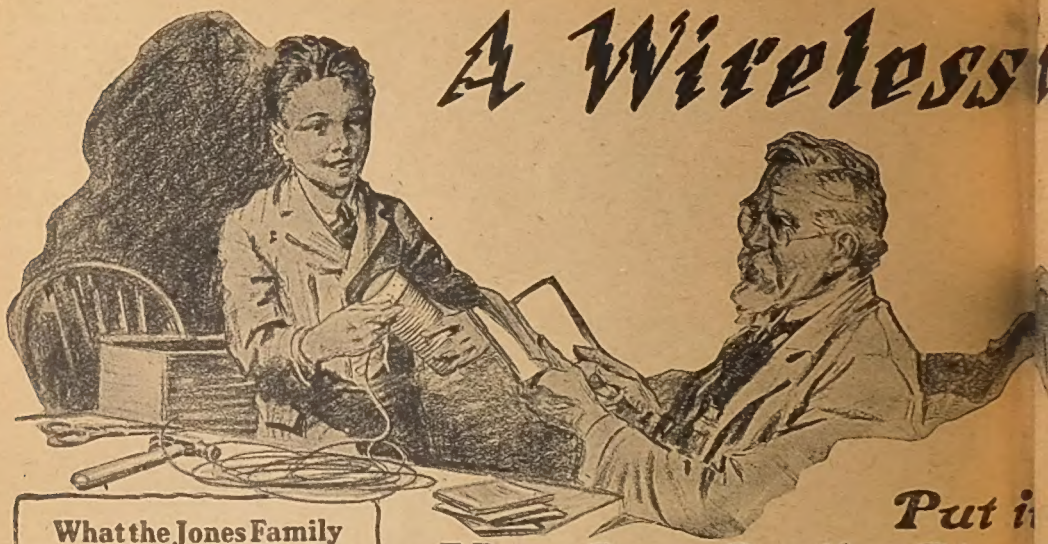

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Never Lonely Any More

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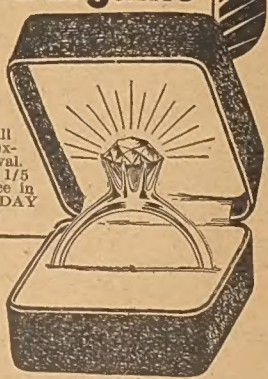

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

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Adventure
JULY 30·1922
VOL·XXXV
NO·6

The RANGE-BOOMER

A Complete Novel

by

W·C·TUTTLE

Author of "Tangled Trails," "Ajax for Example," etc.

THE dull hum of conversation in the Thunder County court-house died down as the door leading to the jury room opened and twelve men filed out. They were all hard-bitted men, wearing the stamp of the range. There was not a hint of the verdict on their impassive faces as they moved into their seats.

From the opposite side of the room, through the door leading to the jail, came the sheriff and a deputy with their prisoner, a tawny-eyed, lithe young man, who walked forward with a half-smile on his thin lips as he looked at the twelve men who had decided his fate.

The judge, portly and gray-haired, came in slowly and sat down behind his desk. The court-room was filled to suffocation, for the case had caused much local interest and range folks like to sit in court when the case has any interest to their business.

Seated just inside the railing reserved for the principals in the case were four people—two men and two women. One of these men was a giant, with a great shock of grizzled hair and mild blue eyes, which belied the fighting-power revealed by his massive, deep-lined face. He was "Flint" Moore, owner of the Box M cattle outfit, and father of "Wild" Moore, the tawny-eyed prisoner.

Beside him sat his wife and his daughter, Patricia, known as "Pat," while with them sat "Bud" Deal, the foreman of the Box M. Patricia had the same tawny eyes as her brother, and black hair and a creamy skin which defied tan. Her mouth was full-lipped and her nose was just a trifle tilted. Patricia had been the cause of many a cowboy's day dreams, but they all grew love-shy under the gaze of her yellow-brown orbs and went away afraid to speak their feelings.

All except Bud Deal, the champion rider and pistol shot of the Thunder Range. Bud's coal-black eyes clashed with Pat's tawny ones—and the black eyes won. Bud was thirty years of age, slender with the face of a Spaniard and the nerve of a wild-cat. Few people loved Bud Deal; but they all respected his ability. He was a first-class cow-man.

Flint Moore's eyes turned from the jury, flashed to his son and centered on the sheriff, who turned his head. Their eyes met. It was only a flash, yet it was full of bitter hatred. Between Flint Moore and the sheriff, Jeff Garvin, was bad, bad blood.

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Garvin was nearly as large a man as Moore, with sandy hair and mustache. His eyes were deep set and steel-gray in color.

For several moments there was tense silence in the little court-room, broken finally by the creak of the judge's old swivel chair as he faced the jury and said—

"Gentlemen, have you reached a verdict?"

A tall man, with a long, thin face, stood up, hitched nervously at the waist-band of his overalls and said softly:

"Yes, sir, judge, we has. Here is our verdict."

He held out a sheet of paper to the clerk, who handed it to the judge.

Every one in the court house leaned forward, watching the face of the old judge for a hint of the verdict. He glanced down at Flint Moore and handed the paper to the clerk to read aloud.

The drone of several flies, buzzing up and down the dusty windows, was plainly audible.

Then the clerk read—

"We, the jury, find Wild Moore—uh—"

The clerk turned the sheet of paper around to better catch the light from the window.

"We, the jury, find Wild Moore not guilty as charged."

For an instant there was silence. Then a huge sombrero sailed up from the rear of the room and seemed to skate along the ceiling. Following it came the suppressed yelp of an enthusiastic cowboy—

"Ee-e-e-e-e-yah!"

The judge hammered on his desk, as he got to his feet, but his voice was not heard above the commotion. Flint Moore had got to his feet and stepped closer the sheriff, who had also got up. Patricia and her mother had rushed to Wild and were smothering him in their embrace.

The sheriff was angry, explosively angry, and did not conceal it. Cowboys vaulted the railing to shake hands with Wild Moore and some of them jostled the sheriff nearer Flint Moore. It was like holding a flame near powder for those two men to be near each other.

"That was a —— crooked verdict!" snapped the sheriff, glaring into Flint Moore's face; and a second later the sheriff went crashing backward into a jumble of loose chairs from a smashing blow to the jaw.

The prosecuting attorney threw himself in front of Flint Moore, trying to stop him, but a huge shoulder crashed into his chest, tossing him aside. The sheriff heaved himself up from the floor, drawing his gun as he came, but Bud Deal sprawled into him, clutching his gun-hand, while other men grasped the sheriff to prevent a killing.

In the middle of the railed space stood Flint Moore, alone, Colt in hand. Jud Frawley, the deputy, was watching him closely, but making no effort to mix into the game. He knew that Flint Moore was in a killing mood.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" cried the judge, trying to elbow his way off his platform; but a number of fight-loving cowboys blocked him from interfering.

The jury had mixed into the quarrel, and it began to look as if the Thunder County court would become a wreck, as far as the interior was concerned. Patricia stepped in and put her hand on her father's arm.

"Stop it, dad," she ordered. "Let's not make things any worse than they are. Nothing can be gained by fighting."

The boys had managed to take the sheriff's gun away from him and now the judge was heard above the uproar.

"Clear the court-room!" he commanded. "This is a disgrace, gentlemen."

"The whole —— case was a disgrace!" rasped Flint Moore. "Let that star-packin' coyote loose and fill his arms with guns."

"Dad!" chided Pat. "Don't say foolish things. Let's all go home and call it a day."

"Good idea," said Wild Moore, smiling. "Has been quite some day, folks. C'm on, dad. Yuh can't get no battle out of Jeff Garvin, cause he ain't got no gun—and yore lookin'."

Jeff Garvin heard the implication, but he did not reply. He was white-hot. His jaw still ached from Flint Moore's fist, but he knew that the men would not permit him to make any attempt to retaliate. He shifted his glance to Wild Moore, and his eyes clashed with those of irresponsible youth. Then Wild Moore laughed mockingly and turned his back on the sheriff.

Flint Moore turned away and left the court-room with his family and Bud Deal. Several of the jury shook hands with Wild at the court-house steps and slapped Flint on the back, telling him to forget Jeff Garvin.

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OTHER men argued with Jeff Garvin, telling him to forget Flint Moore; but Jeff Garvin said nothing. He was a powerful man and jealous of his prestige in the Thunder Range. He had been chief witness against Wild Moore, in which Wild had been accused of rustling cattle. Every one knew that the hard Winter had hit the Box M, and that Flint Moore was pinched for ready cash. Wild was an inveterate gambler—a plunger, and it was reported that he owed some large poker bills. He had suddenly acquired a lot of money. His poker bills were paid and he plunged heavier than usual.

A bunch of seventy steers had disappeared from the ranch in which Jeff Garvin owned half-interest. Garvin knew that several small herds had disappeared prior to his own loss. He wanted to talk with Wild Moore about several things, but Wild was missing. Several days later he showed up and plunged into the gambling-halls. When the sheriff questioned him he merely laughed and told the sheriff to go to a place which, they say, is hotter, on an average, than Fourth of July in Yuma.

Thereupon the sheriff arrested him and tried to build up his case against him, but cattle jurors must be shown something material. In fact, a rustler must almost be found with the stolen animal—to be branded a rustler.

"Whitey" Allen, one of Moore's punchers, rode out with them from Oxbow, while the crowd from the court-house watched them go and speculated on what would happen when Flint Moore and Jeff Garvin met again.

Oxbow was the county seat of Thunder County, an unpretentious little cow-city at the terminus of a railroad branch. It had been a stage-station, a trading-post, and the advent of a railroad, the appointment as a county seat, had changed it little.

There was a main street, narrow dusty, fortified on both sides by unpainted, false-fronted buildings. There was a cross street started, which did not continue beyond a few more buildings of the same type of architecture. There was nothing in Oxbow to attract tourist nor capital. It squeaked in the Winter blizzards and creaked in the Summer heat. Men died with their boots on, and the survivors went on in their own dumb way, talking cattle prices, trading horses and whittling chairs.

When poker, faro and roulette palled, they pitched horseshoes for twenty dollars a corner or spat at a crack for the price of a steer. It was little wonder that Wild Moore's trial had been of interest.

Whitey Allen was a thin, emaciated, tow-haired cowboy, whose features seemed to blend. He was one of those indescribable individuals who are like a sketchy drawing to which neither shade nor high-light has been added, or a half-tone drawing of a cowboy's body with the head and face merely indicated.

None of the party had much to say during the ten mile ride to the Box M, which consisted of a rambling old ranch-house in the cottonwoods along Leloo Creek. There were several pole corrals, a long shelter shed and a one-story bunk-house.

Thunder Range was mostly low, rolling hills, which stretched Eastward to the high banks of Bitter River and Westward to the high range of the Thunder Mountains, which circled the big range like a crescent. There was plenty of water, and just now the hills were ablaze with Spring wildflowers and new bunch-grass, which grew up as if nature sought to cover the bones of the stock which she had wiped out with a terrific Winter.

Every ranch on the range had suffered, but none so heavily as the Box M. Magpies chattered over their nest-building in the willows along the stream. Prairie-dogs whistled from the sides of the hills, and overhead, high in the blue haze, flocks of geese and brant honked their way to the Northern lakes.

It was twilight when they rode into the Box M ranch and dismounted beside the rambling old porch. Deal and Whitey took the horses to the sheds, while the family went into the house. Flint Moore seemed to have aged ten years in a week. Wild was silent; but there was a gleam of exultation in his tawny eyes. He faced his father across the center table in the living-room and a defiant look came into his face as he waited for his father to speak.

"Son," Flint Moore spoke very softly. "Son, where did you get that money yuh was spendin' so free?"

Wild Moore threw back his head.

"Jeff Garvin asked the same question, dad."

"I know he did—but you ain't goin' to give me the same answer yuh gave him."

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"Ain't I?"

Flint Moore shook his head.

"No, son."

"Havin' money ain't no crime."

"No-o-o it ain't no crime; but after the Winter we had it's —— noticeable, son."

Wild laughed.

"Everybody's so —— poor around this forsaken country that an extra two-bits makes folks suspicious that yo're a thief."

"This ain't no time for jokin', son. Yo're goin' to tell me where yuh got that money, and I'm goin' to tell the Thunder Range folks where yuh got it. The Box M and the Moore family comes clean with God and man. Now, talk."

Wild Moore's eyes narrowed as he looked at his father. He was not a dutiful son; and Flint Moore knew that his question would not be answered. It was with misgivings that Flint Moore had watched the growing-up of his boy. He had never shown affection for any one. There was a queer, wild strain in his blood, which grew into a devil-may-care attitude toward every one and everything. He was a throwback to some remote ancestor, whose eyes were a yellowish brown—probably a laughing, king-hating swashbuckler, who swore allegiance to no power.

Patricia had the same eyes, but Flint Moore knew that Pat was just a sweet, warm-hearted girl, who loved this wild-riding brother, but did not ask his love in return. Perhaps she understood him better than the rest.

FOR a full minute the two men watched each other. Came the jingle of a spur on the threshold and they turned to see Bud Deal standing in the doorway. Flint Moore had no way of knowing how long he had been there.

"Didja want that roan mare turned into the hills?" asked Deal softly.

"Her back's kinda sore."

Flint Moore nodded.

"Yeah. Yuh might put a little axle-grease on the spots, Bud."

Bud nodded in agreement, but made no move to leave. He produced a cigaret paper and tobacco and began leisurely to roll a smoke. Wild relaxed and accepted the "makin's" from Bud, while Flint Moore studied them closely. Somehow, it seemed to him that the coming of Deal was a bit too opportune. It had saved Wild the clash, which was most surely due between them, when he had refused to explain where the money had come from.

Patricia came into the room, her eyes shining as she threw one arm around her father's shoulders and patted him on the cheek.

"Just think, dad; this is the first time in three weeks that we have all been able to eat together. Isn't it fine? I have never had much use for the law; but I was mighty grateful when it spoke up and told us that we didn't have a thief in our family."

Wild turned and stared at her.

"Didja have to have the law tell yuh that?"

Bud Deal laughed softly over his cigaret. Patricia did not reply, but her eyes did not waver.

"I hope the law—" began Flint Moore softly, but did not finish.

"I—I think we had better eat supper," stated Patricia sadly.

"I don't reckon I'm hungry," grunted Wild, and turned out of the door, jingling his spurs down the steps and walking away toward the bunk-house.

Bud Deal tossed his cigaret away and turned to Flint.

"Yuh hadn't oughtto try to make him tell——"

"Yo're only the foreman, Deal," Flint Moore's voice was as cold as ice. "Yore business is not connected with my personal affairs. *Sabe?* You must 'a' been there quite a while before yuh jingled that spur."

Deal's dark face flushed, but he did not reply. Pat looked keenly at him and he tried to smile. Flint Moore turned away and went slowly to the dining-room door, where he turned his head.

"Deal, yuh better give Whitey his time tonight. There ain't enough work around here for all of us, and I've got to cut down expenses. May sell out—I dunno."

Deal nodded.

"All right, boss. I reckon we'll get along."

Flint Moore went into the dining-room, and Deal turned to Pat.

"The old man's kinda upset, honey."

"Don't you think he has a right to be, Bud?"

Bud grinned and shook his head.

"Not a bit. The jury cleared him as clean as a whistle, didn't they?"

"The jury—yes. Wild refused to testify. There was only the sheriff's suspicions

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to pass judgment upon, and you know that no cattle jury will accept suspicions, Bud. That jury knew that Jeff Garvin hates dad."

"Well, that trial is all over, and your dad ought to forget it. A young feller don't like to have anybody hornin' into his business, and I can see why Wild—see how he feels about it."

"Perhaps you can, Bud," replied Pat softly, and Bud wondered why she emphasized "you" so strongly.

They went into the dining-room together.

II

IT WAS just at the hour when night fades into the pale shades of the dawn. No. 52 was thirty minutes behind schedule, which accounted for the extra throb and sway of the long string of Pullmans, as the huge compound engine thundered its way around the curves of the Snake Creek hills.

Suddenly there came the screech of brakes and the train ground to a shuddering stop. There was no sign of water-tank, station or signal. The front end of the train was just around a sharp curve.

A man darted back from the engine, running close to the side of the baggage car. He stepped in between the baggage car and the next coach, broke the air-hose, lifted the coupler and swung out, waving his free hand. As the engine started ahead he swung up on the rear of the car and the engine and one car went on around the curve.

In the rear of the engine cab stood a masked man, with a pistol in each hand. Lying half across his seat was the fireman, a bloody welt on his head, while the engineer looked straight ahead and drove according to directions. The fireman had attempted to fight the two masked men, and had paid for his foolishness. A mile farther on the man gave the command to stop, forced the engineer to precede him out of the cab, and the two of them went back to the baggage car.

Under the baggage car, huddled on the precarious rods was a man. His face was covered with a once-clean bandanna handjerchief to protect him from the stinging particles of dust. His clothes were driven full of grit and he was smoke-blackened until it was impossible to tell whether he was a white man or a negro.

The halting of the train had been a godsend to him, as he was nearly exhausted from an all-night grip of the rods, where he had fought against sleep and exhaustion. He could see the lower half of the engineer's and the masked man's bodies, as they came to the door of the baggage car. He saw the other man come from the rear of the car and join them.

He strained his ears to hear what was being said, but was unable to get more than an occasional word. He heard some one mention "dynamite" and a little later, "good sense." Then he heard the door slide back in its grooves.

He relaxed for a moment and reached for his cigaret papers and tobacco. He grinned through the grime on his face at the cigaret he managed to make. It was greasy from his fingers, and his dry tongue had little power to seal the smoke.

Suddenly there came a crash above him—a jerking crash, which almost threw him off the rods. His cigaret fell to the road-bed and he clung with both hands. The three men dropped back to the ground, and he could see that one of them was carrying a canvas sack, which was heavy with its contents. One of the men started toward the engine.

It suddenly struck the man on the rods that this was a train hold-up. One of the men seemed to take a backward step, and from up by the engine came the dull report of a pistol. The man who had staggered went to one knee and the other sprang to him. The man on the rods could see that this kneeling man was completely masked. The other was firing toward the engine.

He stopped and helped the other to his feet, and as he did so he dropped his pistol to the rocky ground. He yanked the other man to his feet, swept up the pistol, and the two of them slid off the grade into the brush, taking the heavy canvas sack with them.

The man on the rods uncoiled swiftly and crawled out the opposite side of the car, and a moment later the engine and car began backing swiftly toward the rest of the train. The man had rolled into the brush and stayed concealed until the engine had disappeared around the curve.

Then he got to his feet and crossed the track, looking curiously in the direction taken by the bandits. It was a heavily wooded slope, and the two men were nowhere in evidence. He glanced down at

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the ground. A bent and blackened silver dollar lay among the rocks and near it was a small, almost triangular piece of pearl. He picked it up and studied it, and finally put it into his pocket. Then he crossed the track and plunged into the hills, going in the opposite direction to that taken by the bandits. He swore softly at himself for being fool enough to leave the train at that time. He realized that the rods of that train, even if he was discovered at the next stop, would be safer than being found in the hills.

He watched the train pass the spot of the hold-up, roaring its way to the next stop to spread the alarm, which would send mounted men on the trail of the outlaws. In a few hours the hills would be searched by men who knew every inch of them.

The man plunged on over a ridge and down into a ravine, where he found a stream of water. In lieu of soap he used sand, and did not cease scrubbing until he was restored to his normal color. He was wearing a cheap flannel shirt, an old vest, overalls and short boots. His hat was a nondescript sombrero.

When he had laundered himself as well as possible he sprawled at the edge of the stream and drank deeply. The reflection of his own face in the pool seemed to amuse him. All his life Jimmy Devlin had smiled at his own features; for Jimmy Devlin was far from handsome.

Jimmy's hair was a cross between a roan and a sorrel. It would not part. His eyes were very blue and deepset. His nose was a trifle too generous and had been knocked a bit askew in a fight. His mouth was large and seemed to hold a perpetual smile. He was thirty-two years of age; five feet eleven inches tall and weighed a hundred and seventy-five. He was an expert cow-hand, willing to argue anything from psychoanalysis to the right way to bake a bean—and had just got out of the penitentiary, after fifteen months served on a three-year sentence.

Jimmy had been sent up for doing just what he had seen these two men doing a short time before. According to the records of Red Lodge County, Jimmy Devlin was a bold, bad train-robber.

This was one of the reasons why Jimmy did not want to be picked up by the officers. Inside his vest pocket were his parole papers. He knew that the officers would be very glad to find him, and he also knew that he would have a hard time making them understand that he had nothing to do with it.

If he had been found on the rods of that robbed car he might have been able to convince them that he had nothing to do with it; but a paroled train-robber's words are of little weight, especially when zealous officers are seeking some one to imprison.

Therefore, Jimmy Devlin headed once more into the land of purple sage and dim trails. He felt that he was many miles removed from the spot where he had been arrested and tried, and there was little danger of any one knowing him. Jimmy hated the parole. He would have to stay within the boundaries of the State, and to report at regular intervals to the sheriff of the county. Just now he felt of the bit of paper sewed inside his vest pocket, and it brought a frown, as he plodded along.

He stopped and looked across the hills, which stretched away to the horizon, an endless sea of hill-waves. As far as he could see there was no hint of a squatter's cabin nor sign of barbed-wire fences. Thunder Range was still the open land—a land of the dim trails.

Suddenly Jimmy's serious face broke into a smile and his hand crinkled the paper in his pocket.

"Sure," he muttered, half-aloud, "I should be glad that the paper says Montana instead of Rhode Island, because I hear they have a small area down there."

He turned and started through the sage, disturbing the day dreams of a jack rabbit, which darted from in front of him and went spindle-legging its way down the hill, gathering speed at every jump, until it became but a gray blur in the sage.

"You should be glad, too," chuckled Jimmy, as the rabbit faded from view. "Sure, you'd only get goin' good and run off the edge into the ocean."

Jimmy hitched up his pants and started on, hat in hand. Here was a big, free land—an empire of hills and valleys, far from real civilization; yet Jimmy Devlin felt that he could not be a part of it. He could never be a free man, as long as he must report to the law.

"Twelve wise men said I was a train-robber," he muttered softly, "and who am I to dispute twelve wise men?"

He shaded his eyes with his hand and

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glanced around, as if challenging some one to dispute the question.

"Three years they gave me to repint of my sins, and in fifteen months they got tired of feedin' me. Repint on your own meal-ticket, says they. Be a good citizen from now on, lie to the sheriff fluently, and by doin' so ye may save the State the cost of feedin' ye slumgullion stew and the wear and tear on large rocks."

Jimmy grinned and scanned the country.

"Talkin' to meself like a shepherd. I must take another name, that's very sure, except with the sheriff—bad luck to him. Still, he may not be a bad sort. I hope I get a job before the hills are full of man-hunters—so I do."

He topped a rise and stopped. Before him spread the Thunder Range. He could see the great crescent of mountains, the long, sloping foot-hills. He took a deep breath and shook his head in wonderment.

"Sure I'm a lucky devil, so I am. I was in the Thunder country and didn't know it."

He scanned the country and looked back, where he could see the dim, green line of Bitter River.

"It's the place," he muttered. "I'm too far South yet, though. Sure, I wonder if he did what he said he would? Wish I knew where he was, the poor divil. He wanted to go to Arizony and try to fight the pain in his chest. I was fool enough to cut into the game and let the sheriff chase me. I thought I had a fast horse; but I miscounted me speed per mile.

"Ah, well, it was only fifteen months. I hope that some soft-hearted Mick will help me out in return, if I ever need it. Fifteen months in the penitentiary and further orders not to leave the State. Mebbe it was worth it—I dunno. Talkin' to meself again! Hm-m-m!"

He shook his head and started toward the North.

III

JEFF GARVIN opened his mail, which had collected for several days, It was mostly reward notices, which he scanned and tossed aside. Rewards for yeggs, counterfeiters and even the lowly pickpocket. The sheriff passed them all until he came to a letter which bore the imprint of the State penitentiary. He opened it and frowned over its contents.

Jud Frawley looked up from his newspaper when the sheriff grunted aloud.

"They've paroled Jim Devlin," stated the sheriff.

"Who is he?" asked Frawley. "Oh, yeah. He was sent up before we went into office, wasn't he, Jeff?"

"Uh-huh. Robbed a train in Silverbend County and they trailed him plumb over here before they got him."

"And never got the money, did they?"

"Nope. He got away with twenty thousand dollars. Now they let him out on parole and he'll likely dig it up, thumb his nose at the law and live easy."

"Did you know him?" asked Frawley.

Garvin shook his head.

"Never even seen him. Heard all about the case. Swore he didn't know a thing about it, but they sent him up. Why, he was ridin' a pinto, with a white rump. The sheriff of Silverbend had follered that pinto for a week. They gave him three years. ——! I'd serve fifteen months for twenty thousand dollars."

Frawley nodded in agreement and folded up his paper.

"Seen anything of any of the Box M outfit lately?"

The sheriff snapped around in his chair.

"None of 'em been here in ten days—not since the trial. Mebbe I made a fool of myself, Frawley; but I was sore. That —— Wild Moore would make anybody sore, and his father——"

The sheriff snapped back to his desk and began writing on some legal papers. Frawley nodded, deep in thought. Then—

"Wasn't it reported that Devlin was killed in a jail-break?"

"Yeah. A month ago. Newspapers never get things right. It was denied later. Anyway, he wasn't, or they couldn't parole him, that's a cinch."

The sheriff picked up the letter again and scanned it. He grunted something unintelligible and turned to Frawley.

"Where do yuh reckon this letter has been all this time? Posted two weeks ago."

Frawley got up and examined the postmark. It was quite true that the letter was two weeks old.

"Likely got shoved aside," said Frawley, slowly. "It don't matter none, does it, Jeff?"

"No, but it might 'a' been somethin' important."

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Frawley pursed his lips and went back to his chair. He had been carrying that letter in an inside vest pocket ever since the morning it arrived, but he wasn't going to tell the sheriff. The vest had not been worn since that morning until now. Still, it was not important.

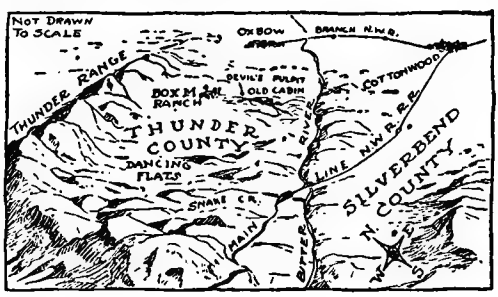
A man, bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves, came in the door and walked to the sheriff, to whom he handed a telegram, watching the sheriff read it. Frawley got up, as if to get a peek at the message, which had suddenly galvanized the Garvin into life.

"Listen to this, Jud," ordered the sheriff, and read the message aloud:

"NUMBER FIFTY-TWO HELD UP BY TWO MASKED MEN IN SNAKE CREEK HILLS AT DAYLIGHT THIS MORNING. FIREMAN JOHNSON KILLED. BLEW SAFE AND GOT AWAY WITH BIG SHIPMENT OF GOLD. TRAIN WAS STOPPED AT FIRST CURVE NORTH OF SNAKE CREEK BRIDGE. ENGINEER SAW ROBBERS GO EAST FROM RAILROAD.

(signed) SHERIFF FRANKLYN COTTONWOODS."

"Snake Creek Bridge," mused Frawley. "No use goin' down there, I don't reckon. They'll have hours start of us."



"Cinch," agreed the sheriff. "Only thing we can do is to go out the Box M road and cut across the hills to Snake Creek. It's almost a cinch that they won't try to hide out East of Bitter River. Mebbe we'll cut their trail some'ers."

"Take a pack outfit?" queried Frawley, and the sheriff nodded. "One horse. Throw on enough for about four days, Jud. Better pack the brown mare. She's got more speed than the rest. I'll wire to Franklyn and tell him we'll work the Thunder Range, but for him to watch that they don't get across into the breaks of Swan River."

Jud Frawley worked swiftly and in half-an-hour they were ready to hit the trail. Both men were well mounted and the small pack was diamond-hitched to a rangy brown mare.

Without causing any questions or excitement they rode out of town, heading down the dusty road, which led to the Box M. They covered ground swiftly, with the pack-mare swinging along at a stiff gallop. Both men knew it might be a hard trip, with the odds greatly in favor of the hunted. There were hundreds of places in the east side of the Thunder Range where two men might hide out indefinitely. It was a case of cutting their trail, more by accident than design, because the range was full of loose horses, some shod, some barefooted.

Jeff Garvin did not intend to stop at the Box M ranch. He knew that his presence was not at all desired at that certain place. The enmity between him and Flint Moore was of many years' standing, and was caused by a horse race and the native truth of an Indian.

IT WAS only a cayuse race, yet much money had been wagered. Flint Moore had a horse in the race as did Jeff Garvin. Both owners were too heavy to ride their own horses, and expect to win; so Garvin suggested that they each hire an Indian boy to ride.

Moore agreed and selected his boy the day before. That night Garvin drank much whisky and made many bets on his horse. Moore took part of the bets, in which Garvin gave foolish odds. Moore's horse won.

An hour or so after the race Moore found his jockey, almost beaten to death, and doctored him back to life. The Indian boy told Moore that Garvin had tried to kill him. After much questioning Moore found that Garvin had bribed the Indian boy to throw the race. He had given the boy ten dollars to do this, but the boy had not understood the white man's crooked scheme and had ridden to win.

Moore hunted out Garvin and found him in a gambling hall. Before the crowd, Moore told what the Indian boy had told him and then proceeded to whip Garvin. It was a complete job. Later that night, some one hit Moore over the head with a gun and robbed him of his own money and the winnings of the race. The next day Garvin had plenty of money, but Moore could not prove who hit him. From that

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time on there was an enmity which grew with the years.

THE sheriff and his deputy rode past the sagging gate to the ranch-house, and started into the hills, past the corrals, when they met Patricia, leading her saddle-horse. She watched them ride up to her and made no effort to avoid them.

Garvin eased himself in his saddle and glanced back at the ranch-house before he said—

"Yore dad at home?"

Pat shook her head.

"No."

"Yore brother?"

"Why do you ask?" Pat looked straight at him, and Garvin smiled.

"Then he ain't, eh? Where's Bud Deal and Whitey Allen?"

"Whitey isn't working here. Hasn't been here for about ten days."

"Which don't tell me where Bud Deal is," reminded Garvin.

"No?" Pat was not a bit afraid of Jeff Garvin. "Perhaps you had better find Bud Deal and ask him."

"Yeah," nodded the sheriff. "Mebbe it would pay me to do just what yuh say. They're all out in the hills, ain't they?"

"Are they?" queried Pat interestedly. "Know any more news about our affairs, Mr. Garvin?"

Garvin swore under his breath and spurred ahead. Jud Frawley grinned at Pat and lifted his hat as he followed the sheriff. Down in his heart Frawley applauded Pat Moore, and he was not going to let Garvin's prejudices against the Moore family change his opinion that Pat was about the finest girl he ever met.

The sheriff led straight into the south, until the broken hills concealed them from the ranch-house; then he turned his horse at right angles and swung up the bottom of a dry ravine. They climbed to where the ravine forked and the sheriff stopped and dismounted.

"What's the big idea?" queried Frawley, as he watched the sheriff swing his field-glasses over his shoulder.

"We'll climb up here to the top and watch that —— ranch, Jud. I ain't takin' no chances this time. Flint Moore needs money pretty danged bad, I'm tellin' yuh. Him and that go-devil son of his ain't home, and I'm goin' to see when and from which way they do come."

"How about Bud Deal?" asked Frawley, as they settled down in the rocks, looking down at the distant ranch-house.

"All depends," grunted Garvin. "I'm lookin' for two men ridin' together. Bud Deal is goin' to marry that yaller-eyed girl, and the Box M needs money pretty danged bad."

Frawley grunted and stretched out in the shade. As far as he was concerned it was all right. He would rather lie in the shade than to ride in the sun, and if the sheriff wanted to loaf on the job, he was willing to help him.

It was about four o'clock when the sheriff picked up the two riders heading toward the ranch-house. It was Flint Moore and his son, beyond a doubt. Frawley took the glasses and nodded in agreement.

"Still that don't spell nothin'," stated Frawley, as he handed the glasses back to Garvin. "Two men ridin' together don't mean they robbed a train."

"Ke-rect!" snapped the sheriff. "But it resembles such to the extent that I'm goin' to find out where they've been. It's about twenty-five miles from here to where that hold-up was pulled off, Jud. Come on."

Garvin got to his feet and started down the hill toward their horses.

"Think a little about this, Jeff," cautioned Jud, angling down the hill, digging his high-heels into the turf. "Flint Moore ain't no shrinkin' vi'let, and he hates you a lot. Wild ain't exactly got any cause to love yuh—and they're both pretty —— fast with a six-gun."

Garvin turned at the horses.

"Stay out of it if yo're scared, pardner; but I'm goin' down there. *Sabe?*"

Frawley swung to his saddle and circled the pack-mare.

"I ain't afraid, Jeff; and you know it. We'll just be rammin' ourselves against hot lead, thasall. Lemme go in alone and talk to 'em."

"Fine chance!" sneered Garvin. "Have folks find out that I was scared of Moore. No, we go in together, or I go in alone."

"All right, all right," grunted Frawley. "Statistics shows that most men die before they reach thirty years of age, and I'm ten years over the average right now."

Flint Moore and his son reached the ranch-house ahead of the sheriff and his

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deputy. Flint had gone into the house, while Wild had taken the horses to the corral. Garvin and Frawley rode boldly through the gate and up to the porch.

FLINT MOORE stepped out on the porch, minus his belt and gun and carrying a newspaper. He stared at Garvin steadily, wonderingly. Then he said—

"What do you want here, Garvin?"

"Just a little information, Moore," replied the sheriff easily, noting with satisfaction that Moore was unarmed.

He eased himself in the saddle and dropped the reins over the saddle-horn.

"Where yuh been, Moore?"

"Where have I been?" Flint Moore repeated the question.

"Uh-huh."

Moore took several moments to collect his thoughts, and then—

"What business of yours is where I have been?"

"None—mebbe. Saw you and yore son ridin' in and I'd kinda like to know where you've been, thassall."

Moore frowned. It was inconceivable that the sheriff should ride in and ask where he had been—especially as he and Garvin were sworn enemies.

"I don't *sabe* your reasons, Garvin; and it's none of your —— business where we've been."

Garvin fidgeted with his bridle reins.

"Have you met anybody who could swear where yuh was at a certain time?"

Moore frowned and shook his head.

"Didja leave home today?"

"No, we left yesterday. Now, what in —— is all this about?"

"The train was held up at Snake Creek bridge this mornin' about daylight," replied Garvin slowly.

The newspaper slipped from Moore's hand. For a moment he stared at Garvin and then came straight down the steps and up to the horses. Garvin's hand slid to his gun. He had felt the weight of Flint Moore's fist and was not going to take any chances.

"You accuse me of doing that?" Moore's voice was very low, but distinct.

"Don't get het up," advised Garvin. "If yuh didn't, yuh can prove yuh didn't, can't yuh?"

"Can you prove I did, Garvin?"

"I reckon," said Garvin slowly. "I reckon we'll let the jury decide that."

Garvin's hand came up quickly and his pistol pointed at Flint Moore.

"Yo're under arrest, Moore. Don't move," and then to Frawley, "Go and get the kid, Jud."

As Frawley turned his horse toward the sheds Pat came out on the front porch. For a moment she stared at her father and the sheriff and then she came down the steps and up to them. She looked at the pistol in the sheriff's hand and at her father's tense face.

Wild Moore came out of the stable and saw Frawley riding toward him. He could see his father standing beside the sheriff's horse, with Pat a few feet away.

He knew that something was wrong and waited for Frawley to come up. Frawley was doing something he did not want to do; but he was only the sheriff's hired man.

"I reckon yo're under arrest, Wild."

Wild Moore looked up at him. He did not dislike Jud.

"What for?"

"Sheriff thinks that you and yore dad held up the train at Snake Creek this mornin'."

"The —— he does!" exploded Wild, and walked rapidly up to the sheriff, paying no attention to the gun.

"What's all this fool talk about?" he demanded.

Frawley rode up beside him and waited for the sheriff to speak.

The gun turned slowly to cover Wild, and the sheriff spoke to Frawley—

"Take his gun, Jud."

The tall deputy dismounted and removed the gun from Wild's holster.

"Wild, can't you prove where you were yesterday and today?" asked Pat. "Didn't you see anybody?"

Wild shook his head.

"Never seen a soul, Pat. We made camp at Dancin' Flats last night. Why, we wasn't within eight miles of the railroad."

"Well," said the sheriff, "I reckon you can saddle up again and come with me to Oxbow."

"You mean—" began Flint Moore.

"Jail—sure," nodded the sheriff. "If yuh can prove yuh didn't do it—fine. I'm listenin' for a proof."

"And while you are listening for innocent men to prove their innocence, the real

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robbers are making their way to safety," said Pat.

Garvin laughed aloud and started to drop his pistol back into its holster. His prisoners were unarmed. He looked down at Pat.

"Sister, that sounds real smart; but I'm one *hombre* that yaller eyes and a smooth tongue never did faze."

Flint Moore was only a few feet away from the sheriff, and his spring caught the sheriff unawares. His arms circled the sheriff's body, and a backward heave, with his knees braced against the horse's side, threw Garvin out of the saddle and sprawling to the ground. Like a flash, Flint Moore tossed aside the sheriff's gun and waited for him to get up.

Jud Frawley started forward as if to help Garvin, but Wild tripped him with an outflung foot and he almost fell over the sheriff. Before he could regain his balance Wild dived into him, knocking him sidewise and almost under his frightened horse, where Wild yanked his gun from its holster and secured his own from where it had dropped in the mixup.

Jeff Garvin struggled to his feet, cursing madly, and rushed at Flint Moore. They were nearly equal in size, but Flint Moore had whipped him before and both men knew he could do it again. This knowledge won for Flint, just as it lost for Garvin.

Moore smashed through Garvin's clumsy guard and drove him across the yard with terrific smashes, which Garvin could not block. Garvin fought back like a tiger for a moment, but a blow to the jaw took all the strength from his muscles, and a second later a haymaker swing crashed against his chin and he went down like a stricken steer.

Flint Moore turned toward the porch, where Wild and Pat were sitting side by side. On the steps sat Frawley, his hands on his knees, a half-smile on his face. Moore noticed that Wild was dangling a pistol in his hand.

"That," declared Frawley in appreciation, "that was complete and plumb sudden. Fallin' around thataway caused me to miss a little of it. Kinda like a prizefight I was to in Pendleton once. They rung the bell and I turned m' head to spit. Missed the fight, by jing! Hope he seen me start to help him."

Flint Moore leaned against the porch and watched Garvin struggle back to his feet. He was a badly whipped man and did not seem to know just where he was going.

"Busted his rudder!" exclaimed Frawley, and then to Wild, "Mind lettin' me steer him?"

Wild grinned and shook his head. Frawley got Garvin by the arm and led him back to his horse, where Garvin clung to a stirrup and tried to clear his brain. Frawley turned to Flint Moore.

"I reckon he won't take yuh with him this evenin'."

"I reckon he will!" retorted Flint. "If he don't take us in with him, we'll take him in with us. He's made his arrest, now he's got to make good on it. Go get the horses, Wild."

Garvin got slowly on his horse. He was sore from his beating and his head ached badly. Flint Moore walked in close to him, and Garvin flinched at the feel of the muscular hand on his knee.

"Garvin, if you ever speak to my daughter or about her, I'll beat you to death."

Garvin nodded with evident understanding and caressed his aching jaw. He dreaded having to speak to any one.

Mrs. Moore was busy in the kitchen at the rear of the house and knew nothing of the turn of events until Pat went into the house and told her. They both went outside as Wild rode up leading his father's horse.

The leavetaking was short. Mrs. Moore, a patient little woman, bowed her head sadly over the inevitable. She knew that they were not guilty, but that the sheriff would try to make them as much trouble as possible.

Pat and her mother stood on the porch and watched them ride away, with Garvin, unarmed, riding in the lead, closely followed by Frawley, also unarmed. Flint Moore and Wild rode side by side. Frawley turned and waved his hat at the two women, as he yelled a good-bye to them. Garvin rode straight ahead, never taking his eyes off the road. He knew that Oxbow would laugh when they heard how he had brought in his prisoners; and Jeff Garvin hated to be laughed at.

Frawley did not mind. In fact he was secretly pleased over the turn of affairs. It had looked to Wild as if Frawley had started ahead to assist the sheriff, when Flint Moore yanked him from his saddle; but the fact of the matter was that Frawley intended to jump Garvin for his words to Patricia.

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IV

JIMMY DEVLIN disliked walking and refused to take it in large doses. In fact, he did not have a definite destination in view. He wanted to get a job on a cattle-ranch. He had been unable to prove his innocence at the time of his trial, but the brand of train-robber sat lightly on his shoulders. He whistled softly to himself and kept to the low ground, taking no chances of being seen and picked up as a suspect.

He had felt sure that he would find a ranch, where he could get a meal; but no ranch could he find, and hunger grew great within him. A well-directed stone secured a small brush-rabbit, which he dressed at a small creek and prepared for broiling.

He was about to light a fire, when he saw a rider cutting along the sky-line, traveling north. It was Bud Deal, heading for the Box M, but Jimmy did not know him.

"Ah-ha!" grunted Jimmy aloud. "That's either an officer of the law or an innocent man; otherwise he wouldn't be skylarkin' along on the top of the hills. I should be wise and crafty, so I should; but eat I must, even if I'm spotted by me firelight and hung at daylight."

Even a fat, young brush-rabbit is not exactly food for the gods, when salt is conspicuous by its absence; but Jimmy ate it all, loosened his belt and curled up on the ground.

The heat of the day gave way to the chill of night, and Jimmy grew uncomfortable. Finally he got to his feet and gazed off across the hills. A moon was coming up behind the Thunder Range. Far away came the mournful yelp of a coyote.

"Ye have nothin' to yowl about," commented Jimmy aloud. "From what I can see, ye have plenty to eat. Old Man Winter sure stocked up your grub-box, ye loafer. I am no —— owl; but I'd rather walk than freeze, and I've a hunch I'm goin' to find a ranch pretty soon."

He stamped out the remains of his little fire and started climbing the hill. He stopped at the top and scanned the country. A mile away glimmered a tiny light in a window at the Box M.

"There it is," whispered Jimmy. "Me guidin' star."

His voice lifted in a lilting Irish tenor—

"Like a candle that stays in a window at night,
Your fond love has cheered me and guided me right."

For Jimmy Devlin could sing, and many a crowded bunk-house had remained hushed long after his voice had died away. Jimmy had only sung once in prison. It was not allowed; but one night, long after the corridors were quiet, his voice was lifted in melody and he sang "My Wild Irish Rose."

A burly guard, with a deep brogue, came to his door and haltingly commanded him to "desist that yowlin'!" But it was only after the last note had died away. Jimmy said nothing, but a prisoner across the corridor swore feelingly at the guard, who made no reply. Even prison guards are human.

Jimmy struck a well-worn cattle-trail, which led him straight to the ranch-house. He could smell the odors of cooking, as Mrs. Moore cooked supper for Bud Deal. He could see two people standing on the front steps, back-lighted by the lamplight from the open door.

Jimmy did not know just what conditions might be found at this particular ranch-house; so, instead of walking boldly to the people on the porch, he stopped and announced his coming with an old cowboy song;

"I'm so goshawful hungry, I'm plumb out of breath;
If some one won't shoot me, I'll sure starve to death."

Jimmy waited a moment, and then a girl's voice replied—

"Grub-pile!"

" 'Tis heaven," muttered Jimmy and came up to the porch. Pat Moore and Bud Deal looked curiously at him, as the lamplight showed his homely features. Jimmy smiled and removed his hat.

"Friends, it is not me mind that makes me a night intruder; because I have a control over me own brain, but the stummick of me contains nothin' but a tiny brush-rabbit, half-cooked and unseasoned. Could ye give me a bit to eat and a place to sleep?"

"Yore kinda off the beaten trails, ain't yuh?" asked Bud Deal.

Jimmy knew that Bud Deal thought he was a common tramp.

"Aye; but the best of us get off wrong, pardner."

"Come in," said Pat kindly. "Can you eat ham and eggs?"

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"Lord love ye!" gasped Jimmy. "I could that."

The three of them walked into the dining-room, and Jimmy bowed low to Mrs. Moore, who was just coming in with a platter of food.

"Mother, this man just walked in, and he said he was very hungry," stated Pat.

Mrs. Moore smiled at Jimmy—

"You are welcome to what we have, I am sure."

"And who could ask for more, ma'am? The fruit of the beautiful hen and the runnin' gear of the noble hog is a fit repast for the gods. I thank ye from me heart."

Bud Deal had studied Jimmy a bit closer in the light. His clothes were of the range—not the kind a tramp would wear. Jimmy had picked them up at a second-hand store.

"Cow-hand?" asked Bud.

Jimmy looked up and reached for the sugar—

"Aye."

There was something about this glib-tongued, homely young Irishman that appealed to Pat. She was also of Celtic blood, but several generations removed. This man had come out of the night with a smile and a song, just when they needed a smile and a song. He was soft of tongue, ready of wit, and Pat felt that he would fight just for the love of battle.

Jimmy stole occasional glances at Pat. She was a new type to him.

"Irish, except for the eyes," he reflected to himself. "I wonder now if a heart of gold has anythin' to do with colorin' her eyes? Jimmy, you paroled bandit, take your thoughts off the lass."

He glanced across the table at Bud Deal. Jimmy did not like Bud. The swarthy face, coal-black eyes, the small, pointed mustache, sleek, black hair—none of Bud Deal's features appealed to Jimmy. Bud was handsome, graceful—a dashing figure of a cowboy; but Jimmy disliked and feared that type.

"You're a clever divil," reflected Jimmy. "Slick as silk, and unless I misdoubt ye, my lad, ye wouldn't be of much value in backin' up a friend. Ye think too much of your good looks—more than ye would of friendship."

Jimmy smiled at Pat.

"I was so hungry that I forgot me manners. My name is Jimmy Smith."

Pat smiled back at him.

"Out here we wait for folks to tell their names. My name is Patricia Moore."

Jimmy got to his feet and bowed.

"Miss Moore, it is the greatest pleasure of me life."

He turned to Mrs. Moore, before Pat had a chance to introduce them, and held out his hand.

"Mrs. Moore, I know ye are; and 'tis a pleasure to come out of the night and meet a lady like ye."

He turned to Bud Deal, who was looking on, a slight sneer on his lips.

"Mr. Smith, this is Mr. Deal," said Pat.

"How do ye do, Mr. Deal," said Jimmy, bowing.

Neither of them offered his hand. Pat noticed this and frowned slightly.

"Mr. Smith can share the bunk-house with you tonight, Bud," said Pat.

Bud grunted and finished his coffee. Pat and her mother went into the living-room and Jimmy sauntered out on the porch to smoke a cigaret. A collie pup came up and nuzzled at him and Jimmy took the woolly little fellow in his arms. The pup squirmed with delight and Jimmy sat down on the steps to play with it.

He could hear Pat and her mother talking and some of the fragments of conversation came plainly to his ears. They were talking about the holdup and the arrest. Bud Deal came out on to the porch and jerked his head toward the bunk-house.

"I'll show yuh where to sleep, Smith."

"Sure, that's a welcome sound, pardner. I'm dead on me feet, and a bed sounds like the tinkling of cymbals to me ears."

Inside the bunk-house, Bud pointed out a bunk. Jimmy sat down and slowly drew off his boots.

"Not much of a crew around here, eh?" he queried.

Bud Deal shook his head.

"Nope. Sheriff took the boss and his son to jail this afternoon."

Jimmy looked down at the boot in his hand and then at Bud.

"For what?"

"Holdin' up a train."

"Indeed? Holdin' up a train, eh?"

"This mornin'," mumbled Bud, as he licked the edge of a cigaret paper.

"So lately?" Jimmy considered the boot closely. "Well, well! Sure, it must be the girl's father and brother."

"Yeah," rather indifferently. "Flint

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Moore's her dad. Brother's name is Wild."

"Now that's too bad, so it is," Jimmy's voice grew sympathetic. "What proof did the sheriff have?"

"Proof?" Bud shook his head. "I dunno. Seems that he was just lookin' for two men on horseback."

"Which proves nothin'," grinned Jimmy. "Sure they can bail themselves out, can't they?"

Bud shook his head slowly.

"I don't think so, Smith. You see, the robbers killed the fireman."

"That's right, they—um-m-m!"

Bud turned and looked curiously at Jimmy.

"What did you say?"

"I was just goin' to say that it comes under the head of murder, which ain't bailable."

Bud nodded, although seemingly not satisfied. Finally he said—

"Where did you come from, Smith?"

"Me?" Jimmy grinned slowly. "It would take a lot of tellin', Deal. All me life I've been comin' from some place. Ask the wind where it comes from. I'm a drifter—a boomer, a man without a home. I was born with an itchin' foot, and I have neither kith nor kin to say that I may not scratch it where I will."

"Where are you goin'?" asked Bud.

"The same thing applies," smiled Jimmy, "If I had a job I might tarry a while right here."

Bud smoked for a while in silence. Then:

"I dunno what I can do for yuh, Smith. I'm goin' to Oxbow in the mornin' and see the old man. Yuh might stay here until I get back, and maybe they'll want a man to help me, now that the two of them are away. You might as well take the job, if there is a job."

"Sure. Well, I'll pound me ear a few, pardner. I ain't had a real sleep for so long that I've began to think that I traded me bed for a lantern. Good-night."

"Good-night," grunted Bud.

JIMMY was awakened by the sound of galloping hoofs. He glanced around the bunk-house, trying to remember where he was. Bud Deal was not there, so after a moment's reflection, Jimmy decided that the galloping horse meant that Bud was on his way to Oxbow.

He got up and dressed quickly. Somehow he was glad that Bud Deal was going to be away for a while. The collie pup was sitting on the low step of the bunk-house, as if waiting for Jimmy to come out, and met him with a yelp of joy. Jimmy's heels were blistered from his walk of yesterday; but he forgot them and romped with the pup.

Suddenly the pup shot between Jimmy's legs, tripping him, and Jimmy sprawled ungracefully on his face, while the overjoyed collie yipped with delight.

"Have you no consideration for the cook?"

Jimmy sat up and blinked at Pat, who was standing on the porch of the ranch-house, looking seriously at him. He got to his feet and recovered his hat, which the collie tried to take from him.

"My apologies to the cook, Miss Moore. The blessed pup made me forget that I had overslept. Look at the face of him, Miss. Sure, he's laughin' at us both. Has he anythin' against the cook?"

Pat laughed. Jimmy's serious expression was irresistible.

"Come in and eat your breakfast, Mr. Smith."

Jimmy laughed and romped around to the kitchen door, where he knew he would find a wash-basin and cold water. Pat went through the house and came out of the kitchen door, where great masses of hop-vines twined over the porch and half-masked the rear of the building.

Another dog sauntered up from the stables and Jimmy stood, basin in hand, and watched it.

"That is Klooch," said Pat. "She's the mother of the pup."

"Half-wolf, so she is," smiled Jimmy. "The father of the pup must 'a' been pure collie, because the pup don't show any wolf strain, Miss."

Klooch stopped a few feet from Jimmy, watching him closely with her half-closed, almond-shaped eyes. The wolf blood showed in her every action.

"No one has ever made friends with Klooch," stated Pat. "She merely tolerates us."

Jimmy held out his hand to Klooch and started toward her.

"Look out for her," cautioned Pat. "She'll snap."

"She will not," contradicted Jimmy and placed his hand on the wolf-dog's head.

Klooch made no move to show fight. Her

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eyes shut to mere slits and not a muscle of her body moved, while Jimmy rubbed her muzzle and scratched her ruffed neck.

Jimmy turned back to his wash-basin. Pat looked wonderingly at Klooch, who moved in closer and watched Jimmy. Finally the wolf-dog nuzzled at Jimmy's hand.

"Why, she never did that before in her life!" exclaimed Pat.

Jimmy tossed the basin of water aside and smiled at Pat.

"Ye've all been afraid of her, miss. 'Tis the wolf in her, which mistrusts fear."

Jimmy followed Pat into the kitchen, closing the screen door behind them. Klooch and her pup followed up on the vine-covered porch and sat down in front of the door, looking inside. Pat told her mother of Klooch's actions and pointed her out, sitting before the door, evidently waiting for Jimmy to come out.

Mrs. Moore smiled and said:

"It is hard to deceive a baby or a dog. I think it would be still harder to deceive Klooch. Animals and babies have an instinct which tells them good from evil in human beings."

Jimmy blushed at the compliment and bent over his breakfast.

"Sure, ye overrate me, ma'am. I'm just a lazy, wasteful drifter and if there's any good in me it's buried deep under a pile of sins."

"You have never failed to help a friend," stated Mrs. Moore, with conviction.

"Well, now," Jimmy frowned thoughtfully, "it seems that I haven't always been careful to find out who I was helpin'. There's a wide difference between what is known as friendship, ma'am. Just knowin' folks and bein' able to call 'em by their first name don't mean that they are your friends. Ye may find a friend in a flash, or ye may go all your life without one. Clear skies and fair weather is a poor barometer. 'Tis only when the storms hit ye, that ye need friendship."

Mrs. Moore sighed and tucked away a stray wisp of gray hair. Pat leaned against the doorway, deep in thought. Jimmy lifted his head and looked at Mrs. Moore's patient face.

"Mrs. Moore, it comes to me that foul weather has hit the Box M, and that ye are in need of a friend."

Pat looked up quickly—

"Did Bud tell you?"

"Aye," softly.

"They are both innocent."

Jimmy nodded slowly.

"No doubt they are; but bein' innocent is only personal satisfaction, unless ye can prove it to the judge and jury. Ye'll find few mind-readers siftin' evidence in a court of law."

As Jimmy turned back to his food the collie pup set up a vociferous barking and raced around toward the front of the house. Mrs. Moore walked into the living-room and on to the front porch. Jeff Garvin was just about to dismount from his horse.

When he spoke it was plainly audible to Pat and Jimmy.

"Mrs. Moore, I want your husband's gun—his pearl-handled six-shooter."

"Why—I—I don't know—" faltered Mrs. Moore.

Pat whirled from the doorway and glided softly into the living-room, out of sight of Jimmy.

"He didn't have a gun on him," explained Garvin. "I rode out to get his gun."

Jimmy heard Mrs. Moore turn and come back into the living room, followed by Garvin, jingling his spurs and walking heavily. Jimmy got to his feet, and as he did he glanced out of the kitchen door and saw Pat dart past the vines and go toward the barns.

Jimmy walked slowly to the living-room door, where he stood and looked at Garvin's back. Mrs. Moore was evidently searching in a bed-room for the gun, while he looked on. After a few moments Mrs. Moore said:

"I am sure I do not know where it is. When he was not wearing it he kept it hanging in his belt at the head of the bed."

"Yeah?" Garvin's query was sarcastic. "Well, now that seems kinda funny, don't it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm sure that no one has—did Mr. Moore tell you where it was?"

"Didja think he would? I'll find that gun if I have to take this ranch apart! *Sabe?*"

Garvin whirled on his heel and started toward the front door, when he happened to see Jimmy. He stopped short and stared at him.

"You spoke of takin' the ranch apart," reminded Jimmy seriously.

Garvin stared at him and Jimmy returned the stare with interest. Garvin's face showed the effects of the fight of the night

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before and Jimmy smiled at these unmistakable marks of conflict.

"Who in —— are you?" growled Garvin.

"No reply from the defendant," grinned Jimmy. "The son-of-a-gun refuses to answer."

Garvin snorted disgustedly. Jimmy's easy manner and wide grin rasped on his nerves. But Garvin did not want trouble—not physical trouble.

Pat came up to the front door and simulated great surprize at seeing the sheriff.

"I hardly expected to see you today,"

"Mm-yah!" snarled Garvin. "Know where yore dad's gun is?"

"My dad's gun? Didn't he have it on last night?"

"He did not! I'm out here to get it. *Sabe?*"

"Easy," cautioned Jimmy. "File the point off your voice, pardner. The lady has nothin' to do with her father's gun."

"Where do you come in on this?" demanded Garvin.

"Right at this point," replied Jimmy, all trace of his smile vanishing. "You came here to run a bluff on two ladies, didn't you? You was goin' to take the ranch apart, wasn't you? Well, start in."

"Mebbe you don't know who I am," Garvin glowered at Jimmy. "I represent the law in this county, young feller."

"Oh, ye do, do ye? Represent the law accordin' to the statutes?"

"I sure do!" snapped Garvin.

"Then go back and git a search warrant. Ye have no right to come into this ranch-house and ransack the place, without a warrant. Now, git out!"

Garvin's face flushed scarlet and he scratched an itching palm against his holster. He hated to let this outsider tell him his duty. Finally he walked to the door and turned for a parting shot.

"There's a penalty for withholding evidence in a case like this. I'll come back with a warrant and enough men to comb every inch of this place. I have a description of Flint Moore's gun—now, I want the gun."

Garvin clumped down the steps and got on his horse. Pat and Jimmy watched him ride away and Jimmy noticed that Pat sighed with relief when the sheriff had disappeared.

"I do not understand it at all," said Mrs. Moore, almost on the verge of tears. "I really thought that they would be back before this. Surely they can furnish bonds."

Pat shook her head.

"Mother, this is not a case of getting bonds. The robbers killed the fireman."

"Will they have to stay in jail, Pat?"

"I—I'm afraid they will, mother."

Jimmy walked out on the porch and sat down. There was nothing he could do to lessen Mrs. Moore's grief, and he wanted to think a little. Klooch and the puppy came around the house and up to him. The wolf-dog put her chin on his knee and looked up at him with her squinted wolf-like eyes.

Jimmy rubbed her muzzle, absently, thinking about the details of the hold-up—the details he had seen. Why did the sheriff want that gun so badly? Was it of a distinctive type, which might have been noted by the engineer or the express messenger?

He rubbed his nose and squinted down at the wolf-dog—

"Klooch, would any self-respectin' robber pack a gun which any one might identify?"

The dog peered up at him with her inscrutable eyes. The pup chased a buzz-winged grasshopper toward the barn, but was outwitted. Jimmy smiled at the pup's antics. Suddenly it looked back toward the porch, hesitated for a moment and then trotted to a small pile of loose lumber beside the bunk-house and began to paw at it.

Jimmy watched it for a while; but the pup finally tired and came back to the porch, where it curled up in the shade. Jimmy could hear the subdued tones of the two women; but was not able to hear what they were talking about.

He got up and walked slowly down to the bunk-house. There was no question in his mind that Pat had hidden the six-shooter. He walked past the bunk-house, stopped at a corral, where several horses were standing in the meager shade, switching their tails at the annoying flies.

Then he came in at the rear of the bunk-house and around to the side where the lumber was piled. He lifted several of the boards aside, knelt down and picked up a heavy Colt gun, which he shoved inside his shirt, replaced the boards and sauntered inside the bunk-house, without being seen from the ranch-house.

The puppy had seen Pat hide the gun, and with the curiosity of a puppy, wanting to investigate, had made the hiding-place plain to Jimmy Devlin, *alias* Smith.

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He examined the gun. It was a .45 Colt, with a six-inch barrel and beautiful pearl handle. A small triangular piece had been broken from the lower inside corner of one of the pieces of pearl.

Jimmy squinted at this closely and then reached in his pocket for the piece of pearl he had picked up at the scene of the hold-up. It fitted exactly.

He dropped the piece of pearl into his pocket and sat down on the edge of a bunk. There was not the slightest doubt that it was Flint Moore's gun—and it was the gun, or one of the guns, used at the hold-up. It was an easy gun to identify. Few cattlemen carry a pearl-handled gun, especially of that weight and length.

Jimmy examined it closely. The barrel was clean and every chamber loaded.

"The lass will be worried when she finds it's gone," reflected Jimmy, "but a lumber-pile is a poor place to hide anythin'. 'Tis a good feel of a gun and I hate to lay it away."

Jimmy rubbed his chin thoughtfully and looked at the gun. A grin rippled across his lips and he shoved the gun inside his shirt and walked outside. He picked up a piece of a cedar board and examined it, after which he walked down back of the corrals, sat down in the shade of a willow clump and began to whittle.

V

BUD DEAL spent the greater part of the forenoon with Flint and Wild Moore, in their quarters at the jail. Flint Moore had not engaged a lawyer, because he did not think there was sufficient evidence against them to demand legal assistance.

Bud had circulated around Oxbow, getting opinions and from what he had heard it seemed likely that both of the Moores would be held for the next term of the superior court. Oxbow was laughing at Jeff Garvin for the way he brought in his prisoners, but Oxbow knew that Flint Moore and his son were hard men to handle.

"Looks kinda like Garvin was set on makin' us a heap of trouble," agreed Flint. "There ain't a bit of evidence against us, except that we rode in from that direction."

"Where was you that day, Bud?" asked Wild.

"Well," grinned Bud, "I reckon I was closer to the hold-up than you was, as far as that's concerned. I slept at Crazy Horse Springs that night and worked kinda northwest to the foot of the range. I never seen a soul. My idea is that them two bandits went straight across Bitter River and into the Silverbend Hills."

"Leaves the Box M kinda short-handed," mused Flint.

Then Bud told them of the range-boomer who drifted in the night before and offered to take a job.

"Take him on," advised Flint. "Yuh can't work the place alone, Bud."

They fixed up the details. Bud said he would hitch up the buck-board team the next morning and bring in the women, and also bring in some clean clothes. Frawley locked up the cell after Bud came out, and walked outside with him.

"What do yuh think of the proposition, Jud?" queried Bud.

Frawley considered the question for a moment.

"Bud, I don't think they can hang the deadwood on them folks, a-tall; but they sure can hand 'em a bunch of grief. Garvin hates Moore and when yuh hate a man it kinda makes yuh blind to right and wrong."

"I reckon so," nodded Bud. "Well, I've got to go back to the ranch. See yuh tomorrow, Frawley."

Jud watched him ride up the street. Bud was the best rider in the country—and he knew it. He rode a spindle-legged sorrel, which was famed for its speed at a quarter-mile—a sleek, nervous animal, whose hoofs seemed barely to spat the earth as it fretted against the curb-bit.

Jud shook his head and reached for his cigaret papers.

"I ain't no free-nol-o-gist," muttered Jud, "and I ain't no good at prognosticatin'; but I'll be teetotally —— if I trust that *hombre*. 'F a fly lit on him it would skid and bust a leg—and when yuh find a slick cowpuncher—ha'r-oil, per-fume and—aw, shucks!" Jud gave it up in disgust.

Then Bud Deal met Jeff Garvin on the road. They pulled up in the shade of a cottonwood and exchanged views on the weather.

"Didja get it?" asked Bud. Garvin shook his head.

"No. It wasn't there."

Bud had started to lick his cigaret paper, but looked up quickly.

"Wasn't there?"

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Garvin shook his head and told Bud what happened at the Box M. He was peeved because Bud hadn't told him about the new man.

"I never thought about him, Jeff," assured Bud. "He don't amount to nothin'. But where is that —— gun, do yuh suppose?"

"You find it," ordered Garvin. "I need that gun danged bad. Course the engineer can't exactly identify it, but he said one of 'em had a long, black Colt, with pretty pearl handles, and that he would swear it was a .45."

Bud nodded.

"I'll find it, Jeff." Then as an afterthought: "You better have a talk with Frawley. He talks too much."

"What about?"

"Says that he don't think Moore is guilty, and that you just arrested him because yuh hate Moore."

"Zasso! Well, I'll talk to him about it. Comin' in tomorrow?"

"Yeah. I've got to bring in the women. Prosecutin' attorney wouldn't let 'em out on bail, eh?"

Garvin grinned.

"How could he? Murder charge. See yuh tomorrow—and I want that gun. *Adios.*"

Bud rode on down the dusty road, a rutty, yellow ribbon, full of chuck-holes from the Spring thaws. Thunder County roads were not built for fast traffic, being used more as the shortest distance between two points than as the easiest line of travel.

IT WAS supper-time when Bud rode up to the gate to the Box M. He sat on his horse and seemed lost in contemplation of the rambling, old, homey-looking ranch-house, lying half in the shade of the cottonwoods. Beyond it he could see the long, low shelters and pole corrals, backed by the tall willows and the green masses of cottonwood foliage. To the right of the ranch-house was the long log bunk-house. From far back in the willows of Leloo Creek a rooster crowed shrilly. The odors of cooking were wafted to his nostrils.

Bud seemed to rouse from his reverie and smiled softly to himself. He could see Bud Deal in sole charge of the Box M, doing as he pleased. It was true that the Box M was in bad shape financially, but . . . .

Pat came to meet him as he rode up toward the house, and asked for the news. Bud had little to tell, except that the prosecuting attorney had refused bail, and that her father and brother were to be held until the next term of court.

"I'll take you and your ma in to see 'em tomorrow," said Bud. "Better rustle up some clean clothes to take in with yuh, Pat."

He started to ride on, but turned back.

"Met Garvin, as I was comin' out. Said he wanted yore dad's pistol. Know where it is?"

Pat smiled.

"Garvin threatened to take the ranch apart, but when he saw Mr. Smith he stopped bluffing."

"Did Smith stop him from searching?"

"Yes. Told him to get a warrant."

"Oh, he never even looked for the pistol, eh?"

"Started to," smiled Pat. "Why does he want the thing?"

"I dunno. Suppose he'll have to have it, Pat. Anyway, a six-gun is only a six-gun, and little good it will do him."

Bud turned back and rode down to the corral, where he unsaddled, turned the horse into the corral and hung his saddle and bridle under the eaves of a shed.

As he started for the ranch-house, Jimmy cut across from the bunk-house and intercepted him. Jimmy was carrying an old cartridge belt and holster, which he showed to Bud.

"Anybody goin' to care if I wear this thing?" asked Jimmy.

Bud looked curiously at the belt and shook his head. "No, I don't reckon so. Don't even remember who owns it."

Jimmy buckled the belt around his waist, adjusted it to a fit over his hips. From inside his shirt he took out a big, blued Colt .45, with plain, dark wood handles, and fitted it into the old holster.

"Ye get tired of havin' a large gun rubbin' your ribs," smiled Jimmy, patting the holster.

He twisted the gun to loosen up the harsh leather and dropped it in again.

Suddenly he lifted his hand above his waist, fingers splayed far apart. His hand snapped down and up, almost too fast to follow with the eye, and the big gun was tensed at his hip, with the hammer at full cock.

Bud had smiled at the makeshift belt and

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old, warped holster; but now the smile left his lips. Bud knew he was fast with a gun—faster than any man in the Thunder Range; but here was a man, working under the handicap of an ill-fitting holster and an extra heavy gun, able to shade the swiftest draw Bud had ever made.

"Sure, I need practise," smiled Jimmy apologetically.

"Hm-m-m!" grunted Bud seriously. "I reckon we better go and eat supper."

"If you're goin' to town soon, would ye mind gettin' me some shells for this gun?" asked Jimmy. "Sure, I've only got six to me name. It's a .45."

"Mebbe there's some around here," replied Bud. "Flint Moore uses a .45, and he may have some extra shells."

Pat looked curiously at the gun hanging to Jimmy's belt, and Jimmy smiled softly.

"Sure, ma'am, I have to dress accordin' to the prevailin' styles. With the sheriff gallivantin' around arrestin' men because they ride horses, which are goin' north, and the innocent trains bein' held up on the iron highway, I suppose I must burden meself with armament."

"God forbid that we have any more trouble," sighed Mrs. Moore.

"Aye," nodded Jimmy. "'Tis a good wish, ma'am." Then to Pat, "Mr. Deal tells me that your father has a gun of this same size. Do ye know if he has any shells?"

"I'll get his belt," said Pat, and left the room.

Bud frowned at Jimmy.

"Couldn't you wait? I said I'd get them for you, Smith."

Jimmy made no reply. He wondered what Bud meant. Pat came into the dining-room and placed a heavy belt and holster on the table beside Jimmy. About one-third of the belt-loops were filled with .41 caliber cartridges.

Jimmy slipped several loose and looked at them closely. He lifted his eyes and glanced across at Bud Deal, who was busily engaged with his meal.

Jimmy put the cartridges back into the loops and handed the belt across the table to Bud, who looked up wonderingly.

"What's the idea?"

"Would ye look at the size of them shells?"

"Where does the joke come in, Smith?"

"Observe closely that they are .41's, will ye? The ladies will also examine the caliber numbers."

Mrs. Moore and Pat looked at the cartridges, and Jimmy handed the belt to Pat.

"Will ye please put this in a safe place, ma'am?"

Pat nodded, with no understanding of the reasons for this, and started for the door.

"Where is the gun?" asked Bud.

Pat turned and looked at him.

"Dad's gun? Which one, Bud?"

"The pearl-handled one."

"That's the one the sheriff was after," interrupted Jimmy, getting up from the table. "Sure, he was mad as a wet hen. I misdoubt his statement to take the ranch apart to find that gun."

Jimmy laughed and went out the rear door, going back to the bunk-house. Klooch and her puppy met him at the door and went with him; the puppy vociferous in its admiration for Jimmy, the wolf-dog slow and easy of movement, pacing beside Jimmy and looking up at him through slit eyes, as if wondering deeply why she admired this human being above all.

Pat leaned against the kitchen door and watched Jimmy disappear with the dogs, while Bud finished his meal, frowning at her. He couldn't afford to let her get away from the fact that he was going to marry her. He must tell this wild Irishman to keep his distance. He got up from the table and went out on the front porch to smoke, while Pat and her mother washed the dishes.

Klooch came up from the bunk-house and walked past him. He spoke to her and snapped his fingers, but she merely turned her head and walked on. Bud had never placed a hand on this dog, and it irritated him to think that this stranger could make friends with her right away.

Klooch sauntered past him, but turned and trotted back to the bunk-house with the long, swinging trot of a wolf and squatted on her haunches in front of the door.

The sun went down behind the big curve of the Thunder Range, tinting the peaks with a glow of gold, and the vast reach of foot-hills and tiny valleys seemed to blot out in a sweep of misty blue. Night-hawks boomed and skirled in the air over the cottonwoods, a pair of magpies flapped their way down the stream, chattering harshly. From afar came the plaintive bawling of a calf.

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Pat came softly out on the porch and stood near Bud, leaning against a porch-post, looking off across the hills. Bud moved uneasily and looked up at her.

"Pat, when do we get married?"

Pat did not reply. It seemed as if she had not heard Bud's question. From down at the bunk-house came Jimmy Devlin's voice, singing, and a hush seemed to settle over the Box M.

"You may search everywhere,
But none can compare
With my wild Irish Rose."

Jimmy was putting the love of his Irish soul into his voice—

". . And some day, for my sake,
They may let me take
The bloom from my wild Irish Rose."

Jimmy's voice died away, and there was silence for a while before Bud got to his feet and said softly—

"Pat, when do we get married?"

Pat turned her head and looked at him.

"I don't know, Bud. Sometime—perhaps."

Pat turned and walked slowly into the house. The tip of the rising moon silvered the Box M, and seemed to throw a direct beam across the ground in front of the bunk-house, where the wolf-dog sat waiting patiently. Bud snapped his cigaret away viciously and muttered to himself—

"That —— range-boomer!"

HE GOT to his feet and started down to the bunk-house. He heard Klooch growl softly and saw a shadowy figure move in between the bunk-house and the corral. The figure stopped in the shadow. Bud glanced quickly around and shifted his direction, as if to go to the corral. The figure fell in behind him, and the two of them stopped out of ear-shot of the bunk-house.

"I told yuh not to come here!" growled Bud. "Whatcha want, Jim?"

Moonlight showed the face of a big Indian of perhaps fifty years of age, dressed in calico shirt and overalls.

"Waum sick," he grunted. "Waum-sick-cole-sick. All the time *cultus wauwau*. Mebbyso *hyas wauwau*." Which meant that some one had fever and chills, talked deliriously and might shout out loud at any time.

"What do yuh want me to do?" asked Bud. "You want medicine?"

"Whisky. Heap sweat. Mebbyso *memaloost*."

"Might not be such a —— bad thing at that," grunted Bud as he led the Indian down behind the corrals and into the willows along the creek.

From the hollow snag of an old tree he drew out a gallon demijohn, half filled.

"If you get drunk I'll scalp yuh!" grunted Bud. "No more whisky! You *sabe* that? No more! Keep away from here after this. Whisky all gone, Jim."

"*Kloshe*," came a sibilant cluck as the Indian glided away in the willows, hugging the demijohn.

"Good, eh?" muttered Bud, and retraced his way back to the corral, where he noisily replaced some bars and carried a coil of rope back to the bunk-house.

The Indian had said, "mebbe *memaloost*," which translated means, "might die," and Bud seemed to derive a certain amount of satisfaction from this thought. The rattling of the bars and the carrying of the rope were merely an alibi, in case any one had seen him go to the corral.

Klooch growled at him as he came up to the door. Klooch hated a rope. She knew it to be a symbol of captivity and an instrument of torture. Neither did Klooch like Indians, and Bud carried the Indian scent from his conversation in the willows. He cursed softly at the dog and went into the bunk-house.

VI

THE next morning Bud hitched a team to the buck-board and drove up to the house to get Pat and her mother. Jimmy held the team by the bits, while the women got in.

"I'll get yuh some shells in town, Smith," said Bud. "You kinda stick around here and take care of the place today. We'll be back late, I reckon."

"Can I get you anything in town?" asked Pat.

Jimmy smiled and shook his head.

"Thankin' ye very kindly, but I have need of nothin', miss. All of ye come back safe, which is enough bringin', I think."

Pat smiled softly, but Bud scowled and gathered up the lines. Mrs. Moore looked gravely at Jimmy and flashed a sideways glance at Pat. Mrs. Moore knew that

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Jimmy meant for Pat to come back safely. Bud knew this, too; but his quick glance at Pat's face gave him no assurance that she had or had not understood Jimmy's meaning.

Jimmy stepped away from the horses and swept off his hat as the high-spirited broncos yanked the light vehicle past him and headed down the dusty road.

He stood, hat in hand until they disappeared, and then walked swiftly to the corral, where he selected a saddle, blanket and bridle. He took a coiled lariat rope and went over to a corral, where several horses browsed around over a scattering of hay.

"Ignorance of the lot makes me cast at beauty," grinned Jimmy, shaking out his loop.

The horses whirled and started circling the corral, kicking up a cloud of dust. Jimmy turned slowly, swinging his loop. Suddenly he jerked the rope forward and the loop sailed over the backs of two horses and dropped over the head of a hammer-headed roan.

The roan plunged and reared, shaking its head like a hooked trout trying to loosen the hook. Jimmy went slowly along the rope, talking softly to the animal. The others bunched across the corral and snorted their disfavor of such actions.

The coaxing voice seemed to drive the fear from the roan and it allowed Jimmy to rub its muzzle.

"You're a fine little animal, so ye are," soothed Jimmy. "A fine bit o' a horse; but I'd feel more satisfied if ye had saddle-marks."

He led the animal outside and held up the saddle for its inspection. The roan snorted in wonderment and Jimmy rubbed his chin. He looked back at the other horses, but none of them showed any saddle-marks.

"Likely none of ye have been ridden," mused Jimmy. "Well, roan, ye can't any more than dump me."

He managed to get the bridle on, after much persuasion and main strength, and then tied a handkerchief across its eyes. The roan only flinched when the saddle was put on, but it arched its back under the pull of the cinch.

Jimmy lost no time in preliminaries. He threw the reins over its neck, swung into the saddle, settled himself and reached over, yanking off the blind.

The removing of that handkerchief seemed to release a mighty power within the roan. It whirled like a flash, sprang into the air and came down, with all four feet bunched together, in a jarring crash, bounding from there like a rabbit, reversing in mid-air and hitting the ground with every muscle tensed.

Jimmy had swung sidewise in the saddle, hooked one foot almost under the roan's shoulder and threw all of his weight on the other foot, taking the jar off his body to a great extent. The roan's head seemed fastened between its fore-legs, but Jimmy made no effort to draw it up. He was doing an exhibition ride, minus an audience.

The roan bawled like a calf, took several stiff-legged hops and began a weaving buck, known as the "worm-fence." Up past the ranch-house they went and down along the fence, with the roan using every trick known to outlaw buckers. But the rider still remained.

At the gate it whirled, rearing wildly, but Jimmy slapped it across the head with his hat and it sprang ahead, throwing itself from side to side in a desperate effort to shake the man loose. Jimmy threw himself sidewise to escape smashing his leg against the corral fence, and horse and rider went down in a heap of dust and broken poles.

Jimmy was unhurt and on his feet when the horse got up, and without a moment's hesitation he mounted again. The roan trembled and heaved from the effort and fall, and Jimmy waited calmly for a continuation, which did not come. He spoke to the roan, spurred it gently with his heels and the animal walked away with him. Jimmy got off and opened the gate. He expected the roan to buck again when he got on, but the roan was no longer a bucker. It had used every trick in its repertoire—why repeat?

Jimmy found the roan hardly bridle-wise but willing to be taught.

"Fifteen months hasn't hurt me for ridin'," grinned Jimmy aloud, patting the roan's neck. "I might do better if I wore spurs; but spurs hurt. Cuttin' and slashin' with sharp spurs is no square deal. Ye roan divil, I hope ye appreciate that I gave ye an even chance."

They crossed Leloo Creek and headed into the hills. Wild flowers carpeted the ground, making the hills look as if they were covered with giant Oriental rugs. The coulées were

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filled with cottonwood and poplar, which added a fresh note of green, while the green-gray of the mesquite made it a wonderland of color.

Up on the point of a bluff a coyote was busily engaged in remodeling last year's den and making it habitable for this year's family. She saw Jimmy and paused in her work to watch him pass. A big, gray badger trundled out of his way and stopped to peer at him from the cover of a granite outcropping.

He rode around the head of a draw, which was filled with trees and brush. The roan pricked up its ears and slackened its pace, as a big, black-tail doe trotted out of the brush and looked at them inquiringly.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Deer," called Jimmy, and the doe nosed higher in the air, sniffing cautiously for a moment and then moving away like a shadow.

Jimmy rode to the top of the ridge and stopped.

Below him the rolling hills stretched far away to the banks of Bitter River, which was the dividing-line between Thunder County and Silverbend County. To the left, a mile or so away, was a peculiarly shaped rock butte, like a giant platform. It was know as the Devil's Rostrum, or the Devil's Pulpit. Jimmy looked at it and a smile reminiscence came across his face.

"Sure, that's the place. Over fifteen months ago and it seems yesterday that I met him on that ridge beyond. He told me he'd leave half the money in a little cabin down the coulée below that tall cliff. I wonder did he?" Jimmy wrinkled his nose from the smoke of his cigaret. "Bedad, I'm no receiver of stolen goods, but I've a curiosity to see if the poor divil kept his word."

He rode straight toward the butte. A number of cattle had been caught on that hillside in a blizzard and their bones, gnawed clean by the wolves and coyotes, looked like clumps of strange plants. Here and there were small bunches of cattle, wearing the Box M brand, their sides already filling out with the luscious grass of Spring.

Jimmy rode past the big butte and swung to the left to the edge of a deep, brush-filled coulée. He followed a deep cattle-track to the bottom and came out into a small clearing, where a tiny cabin was hidden in the trees. A small pole corral was built at the right-hand side of the cabin, using one side of the cabin for part of the enclosure. The corral was empty, but a saddle hung on a peg near the door.

"Somebody livin' in it, from the looks of things," reflected Jimmy as he dismounted and tied his roan to the corral fence near the door.

No one answered his knock, but the door creaked at his touch, showing that it was not fastened. He pushed it open and looked inside. It took him some time to get his eyes accustomed to the dim light after the bright sunlight. There was some one moving inside, and he discovered that the somebody was on the floor, about midway of the room. A strong odor of liquor pervaded the place.

HE WALKED inside. The person on the floor appeared to be an Indian and said Indian was just as drunk as a human being could possible get. One arm was lovingly twined around a demijohn.

A white man was sitting on the bed, braced against an extra roll of bedding—a white man, his face was the color of wet clay, his eyes wild with fever. Jimmy stared at him wonderingly. The wild look seemed to leave the sick man's eyes and he stared at Jimmy.

"Jimmy Devlin's ghost!" he exclaimed in a weak whisper.

"Ye poor divil," grunted Jimmy. "'T'is no ghost I am, Whitey Allen."

"Alive?" gasped Whitey, and relapsed in a fit of coughing, which racked his thin frame. Jimmy waited until he recovered.

"Aye—alive, Whitey, me lad. And ye never reached Arizona after all. Hard, hard luck. Have ye been here all this time?"

Whitey Allen stared at the ceiling for a moment and nodded. Jimmy looked down at the Indian, who was snoring contentedly, and stirred him with his foot.

"And this has been takin' care of ye, eh? Drunken Injun. Some white man, with the soul of a coyote, has sold ye fire-water. 'T'is a shame, so it is. Have ye no doctor, Whitey?"

Whitey Allen shook his head.

"No, I don't need one."

Jimmy nodded sadly. Whitey Allen had told him over fifteen months before this that nothing but Arizona would save him

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from tuberculosis. He and Jimmy had bunked together in the eastern part of the State. Jimmy had drifted on and had not seen Whitey until one day a little later he met him near the Devil's Pulpit.

Haltingly he had told Jimmy of a train-robbery in the county to the east, across the Bitter River. He had robbed a train to get money enough to go to Arizona to win back his health; but the sheriff was close on his trail, and he knew the sheriff would win.

Jimmy's heart went out to Whitey, and his impulsive Irish blood made him offer himself as a sacrifice. He made Whitey trade horses with him, which gave Jimmy a pinto of peculiar markings. Whitey had cried like a baby over it all, and swore that he was going to leave half of the money under the floor of that certain cabin in the coulée to the left of the Pulpit, where Jimmy could find it. Jimmy led the sheriff a merry chase; but was captured. He had no alibi.

He sat down on a broken chair and looked at Whitey. There was no question in Jimmy's mind about Whitey's being in the last stages of the disease. It seemed hard that he must pass out under these conditions. He could imagine Whitey in that leaky little cabin during the terrible Winter. No wonder the man was dying.

The stove was a mass of rust-eaten sheet-iron and looked as if it might fall apart under the weight of a skillet. A small dry-goods box, nailed against the wall, was used as a cupboard, and its visible contents would hardly make a meal for one hungry man.

"Sure, we'll have to get ye out of here, Whitey," said Jimmy cheerfully. "A drunken Injun is —— poor company for a sick man."

Whitey shook his head.

"Lemme alone, Jimmy. I'm fine. Please don't try to move me—please."

"Well, may the divil fly away with ye!" grunted Jimmy. "I'd only do it for your own good. Did ye know the judge gave me three years and the State got tired of me in fifteen months? I'm out on parole."

Whitey choked softly.

"I'm—sorry, Jimmy. Somebody got that money—the money I was leavin' for you."

"Aw, to —— with the money! I would never take it, even if I did earn it in that human corral."

"I planted yours," said Whitey painfully. "Under the floor, like I said, but——"

"Forget it, Whitey. Tell me about yourself."

"I'm here yet," Whitey smiled sadly. "I hid out here for a while, thinkin' maybe they'd find me. I got worse and had to stay. The big Injun took care of me. Thassall."

"Where did he get the whisky, Whitey?"

"I dunno. Came in last night with the jug and drank himself pink."

"And feeds ye on slumgullion, I suppose. Man, ye need milk and eggs and nursin'."

"Jimmy, will you promise me one thing?"

"I'd be hard-hearted as ——, if I didn't. What is it?"

"Don't tell anyone I'm here. I'll get along."

Jimmy studied Whitey for a while. It seemed strange that he preferred to die alone. Human nature is a queer combination of desires, and Jimmy knew this. Perhaps Whitey had a good reason for it. Disease plays queer pranks with a man's mind, and it might be that Whitey had an aversion to seeing any one.

"You're free, white and twenty-one," said Jimmy slowly. "If ye desire it that way, Whitey—God bless ye. But can't I do nothin' for ye?"

"Nothin'," said Whitey shortly. "Just lemme alone."

He coughed deeply and settled down on his pillow. Jimmy watched him for a few minutes and went to the door. The drunken Indian snored harshly and rolled over, still clutching the demijohn.

Jimmy untied the roan and vaulted into the saddle. He studied the cabin for a while, rode around the open side of it and into the coulée, taking a cattle-trail, which led out at the head of the coulée and on to the ridge.

He had ridden perhaps two miles, sitting loosely in the saddle, deep in thought. He wanted to help Whitey, but did not want to break his promise to tell no one. He felt the roan throw up its head and slow its pace. He glanced up and saw Jeff Garvin riding down the slope toward him.

Jimmy stopped and waited for Garvin to come up.

"Kinda warm," remarked Garvin, shoving back his hat and wiping his brow with his sleeve.

"Sure it is," agreed Jimmy, turning in his

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saddle and looking back toward the coulée, "I've been kinda lookin' around and it seems that the Winter did ruin a lot of good beef."

Garvin nodded and squinted across the hills.

"Did yuh come up that brushy coulée?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes. I swung into it below that old cabin and came out at the head of it."

"Anybody livin' in the cabin?"

"No. Wouldn't be fit for anybody to live in."

Garvin nodded as if just a trifle disappointed. Jimmy did not want Garvin to go down there and find Whitey Allen and the drunken Indian.

"Been over to the Box M today?" asked Jimmy.

Garvin shook his head.

"Naw. I passed the bunch goin' to town." He yawned sleepily and relaxed with a grin. "I wonder where in —— that pearl-handled gun is."

Jimmy said nothing. If Garvin only knew it, that gun was hanging within his reach right now; but the plain wood handles, stained dark by rubbing with powdered pencil lead, bore little resemblance to those beautiful pieces of pearl. Garvin eased himself sidewise in his saddle and squinted at Jimmy.

"Pardner, where did you come from?"

Jimmy stared down at the ground thoughtfully for a few moments and then grinned at Garvin.

"Do I look queer? Is there anything about me that seems different from other folks? Do I wear strange raiment or cut my hair unlike other men?"

"Why ask all them questions?" grunted Garvin.

"Because folks are always askin' me where I came from. What in the —— has me last stoppin' place got to do with you or any one else?"

"Strangers ain't never very numerous around here," replied Garvin evenly, "and you kinda drifted in at a bad time."

"Well," Jimmy's eyes twinkled, "well, should I go back and get a fresh start? Or is it that you've found you arrested the wrong parties?"

Garvin glared at Jimmy for a moment, struggling to keep his temper, and then,

"Which don't tell me who you are or where you came from, pardner."

"No," softly, "and that's only a part of it, sheriff."

The smile had left Jimmy's good-natured face, and his blue eyes seemed to fade to a steel-gray. Garvin started to say something, but changed his mind. He turned, as if to ride away.

"Talkin' now might save yuh trouble."

"Sure now, I never depend on me tongue to keep me out of a bit o' trouble. Good afternoon."

Jimmy shook up the roan and rode straight up the slope, while Garvin rode along the side of the hill, heading back toward Oxbow.

"Now why did he speak of that little cabin?" reflected Jimmy. "I had to lie to him about the place, but I'm sure the lie hurt no one. Poor Whitey. Nursed by a drunken Injun. He needs good care and he needs good eats. I've heard that eggs and milk is the proper grub. Hm-m-m! From the looks of him he'd keep the chickens and the cows workin' a day and night shift."

Jimmy rode slowly back toward the Box M, deep in his thoughts; letting the roan take its own way.

VII

MRS. MOORE, Pat and Bud went straight to the office of Dave Cleland, the prosecuting attorney. He had known the Moore family for years, and sympathized with them; but his duty was to prosecute, in spite of friendship. He shook hands with them and patted Mrs. Moore on the shoulder. Cleland was tall and thin, with keen eyes, sharp nose and partly bald head. He smoked flake-cut tobacco in a well-seasoned cob-pipe and spent a great part of his time stuffing in fresh tobacco.

"Are you going to keep my husband and son in jail, Dave Cleland?" demanded Mrs. Moore.

Cleland refilled his pipe slowly and lit a match on his shoe sole.

"Well, Mrs. Moore, I—I wish I could turn 'em both loose; but I can't. Judge Whaley will be here this week and give them a hearing. As far as I can see, there is no evidence; but the sheriff assures me that he'll have the evidence. It appears that the bulk of the evidence centers in and around a pearl-handled pistol of large caliber."

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Pat flushed slightly. Bud had been watching her closely, and wondered what she knew about this gun.

"My husband had such a gun," declared Mrs. Moore.

"Hm-m-m!" Cleland seemed to have trouble with the stem of his pipe. "I believe so. In fact I have seen it myself; but it can only be put into evidence in its material form."

"Then you—the law can not do a thing until after the hearing takes place?" queried Pat.

"I'm sorry," said Cleland. "Honest, I am sorry, Patricia. Please don't hold this against me, will you? I am only a tool of the law."

"Of course you can not help it, Dave. You are only performing your duty."

As they left the office Cleland walked to the door with them, his arm around Mrs. Moore's shoulders. He thought a lot of Mrs. Moore, and it distressed him to think that he was partly instrumental in bringing sorrow to them.

They went to the sheriff's office, which they found to be locked. They had met Garvin on the road. He had barely nodded to them. There was no way of getting into the jail to talk of Flint Moore and Wild. While they debated the situation, Jud Frawley rode in and dismounted across the street.

He saw the three in front of the sheriff's office and crossed the street to them. Frawley owned a bony, seamed countenance, which never seemed to change expression, being habitually serious. He was of medium height, slightly bowed of legs and walked with a slight limp, a memento of a gun-fight with a Mexican, in which Frawley got a bullet in the knee and the Mexican got attended by the coroner.

"Kinda lookin' for yuh, Jud," greeted Bud Deal, but Frawley ignored the greeting until after he had shaken hands with Mrs. Moore and Pat.

"Lookin' for me?"

"Yes," said Pat. "We want to see dad and Wild."

"Shucks!" Frawley looked utterly downcast. "I reckon I'm goin' to be about as much use to you as a tack-hammer in a blacksmith shop. Garvin cut my picket-rope yes'day."

"Discharge you?" asked Pat quickly.

"Yes'm—kinda like that. Yuh see, me and him looks out upon the world with different kind of eyes, and Garvin reckons that he sees a lot better than I do. Anyway—" Frawley shook his head—"my eyes ain't like no spy-glass, the same of which yuh can twist a screw and make the things fit for anybody."

"Then we won't be able to see them?"

Mrs. Moore was very near tears. It was hot in front of that building, and the dust from a passing wagon drifted into their faces. Frawley looked sadly at her.

"Mrs. Moore, ma'am—yuh sure got my p'mission. 'F I had a key I'd sure let yuh in—you and li'l Pat."

In spite of the situation Pat smiled. Jud Frawley had always called her little Pat. Bud looked quickly at Frawley. He had only mentioned Mrs. Moore and Pat.

"I did want to see him," sighed Mrs. Moore. "It isn't right, Jud. And we've got some clean clothes for them."

"I'll see that they git the clothes," volunteered Jud quickly. "Leave 'em with me and I'll hang around till Garvin shows up."

"Mebbe he won't let you in," suggested Bud.

"The —— he won't!" exploded Frawley. " 'F he tries to stop me I'll nail the seat of his pants to the floor and leave him there to starve."

Bud laughed sneeringly, but Frawley merely looked keenly at him.

"You don't believe dad and Wild held up that train, do you, Jud?" asked Pat.

"——, no! Ex-cuse my profanity, folks. I ain't in no way connected with the law now, and I can talk up in church without havin' some sneakin' coyote packin' the talk to the sheriff. I hope the party what told him about me will tell Jeff Garvin that I'm doin' a little investigatin' on m' own hook.

"You folks set easy. I know it ain't right to keep yuh from seein' the old man and the kid; but yuh sure can see 'em at the trial. Folks around town are wonderin' what Garvin is holdin' 'em for. He showed he didn't have much brains when he arrested Wild that time; and he knows danged well that he won't never git elected again if he gits tangled up and falls down in this arrest."

"He likely thinks he is right," said Bud slowly.

"Yeah!" snapped Frawley. "Mebbe yuh mean, he's tryin' to make folks think he thinks he's right."

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Bud did not say whether that was his meaning or not. He knew that Frawley suspected or knew that he, Bud, was the one who warned Garvin against him, and that Jud was working on a dangerous angle.

"You folks want to go right back?" asked Bud.

"Mother and I are going to do a little shopping," said Pat. "It will take us an hour or so. Perhaps by that time Garvin will be back. If he isn't, Jud, we'll leave the clothes with you."

"I'll sure see that they get 'em," nodded Frawley, and walked back across the street.

Bud walked up the street with the women, but left them at the door of Colgate's store, after telling them that he would keep an eye out for Garvin.

BUD was sincere in that statement. He really did want to see Garvin, but it was not in connection with the desires of the Moore family. He circulated around the town, taking a drink here and there, discussing cattle and getting opinions on the coming court hearing of the Moores. Oxbow, or rather the majority of Oxbow, did not believe that Flint Moore was guilty.

Wild had been mixed up in many escapades, and had but recently been tried for a similar offense; which caused some to utter the old quotation—where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. Oxbow knew that Flint and Wild Moore had come to jail, herding their captors ahead of them. Therefore, Oxbow laughed at Garvin. Jud Frawley laughed as hard as they, and gave Flint and Wild all the credit for the capture.

Oxbow knew that Jud Frawley was no coward. He had been tried by fire many times. They resented the fact that Frawley had been discharged. Crime had become too frequent in Thunder County, and Jeff Garvin was in a fair way to become greatly disliked by the law-abiding element of the country.

Bud Deal found some who favored Garvin and hoped for a conviction of the Moores, but they were greatly in the minority. Bud did not commit himself. He wandered around until noon and then found Mrs. Moore and Pat. They were not ready to go home yet. Mrs. Moore wanted to wait longer and see if the sheriff did not come back; so Bud left them at a restaurant.

It was about two o'clock when Garvin came back. Bud saw him across the lower end of the street, heading for his little barn behind the jail. Bud was careful to see that no one else had observed Garvin, and then sauntered down an alley and around the rear of some buildings to the barn. Garvin was unsaddling his horse as Bud came into the doorway.

Garvin turned and looked at Bud, but did not speak.

"How are yuh, Jeff?" greeted Bud.

"I'm all right, I reckon," grunted Garvin, as he hung up his saddle.

He came closer to the door and peered out, as if thinking that some one was with Bud.

"I'm alone," assured Bud grinning, and told Garvin that Mrs. Moore and Pat were waiting for a chance to get into the jail.

Garvin scowled blackly.

"But they don't know you're in town," stated Bud. "They talked with Frawley."

"I fired him!" snapped Garvin. "He talked too much."

"Yeah? And yuh told him that I said he talked too much," accused Bud coldly. "Yuh didn't need to put me in bad with Frawley."

"Zasso?" Garvin's teeth snapped. "Lemme tell yuh somethin', Bud; you was in bad with Frawley before I ever mentioned yuh to him. He said he's goin' to find out where you was the mornin' of that train robbery."

Bud's face did not change expression. He prided himself on his poker-face. Garvin watched him closely. There was evidently no complete understanding between Deal and Garvin, and both were fishing for a lead to work on. Bud glanced over at the horse.

"Been in the hills, Jeff?"

"Uh-huh. Took a little *pasear* over around the Devil's Pulpit."

"Yeah?"

Bud's hand slid from his hip and his fingers softly caressed the silver studs on his holster. It was a perfectly natural move—yet suggestive.

"See anybody?"

Bud's voice was pitched low, and his eyes squinted keenly at Garvin.

Garvin nodded quickly.

"Yeah. Talked with a feller."

Bud's hand twitched closer to the butt of his gun, but his face did not change. Garvin was very close to death. His next words meant life or death to him; but he did not know it.

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"That new puncher yuh got, Bud."

"Oh!" breathed Bud, and relaxed slightly. "Where did yuh find him?"

"Out near the Pulpit. Said he was lookin' over the stock. I seen him ride out of the upper end of the big coulée, and went down to see who he was."

"What was he ridin'—what kind of a horse?"

"Roan—hammer-headed, with black tail and mane. Didn't see any brand."

"The Whistler!" Bud's eyes opened wide. "Do yuh mean to say he was ridin' that outlaw—ridin' him in the hills?"

"I dunno the bronc—only by reputation. Mebbe it was."

"The Whistler was in the corral," stated Bud; "I rounded him up with some loose stock a few days ago. I kinda thought I might sell him to some Wild West show or a circus. Mebbe he'd bring some money at a rodeo; but if this feller, Smith, is ridin' him——"

"Has anybody ever stayed with him?" asked Garvin.

" 'Bunchgrass' Billings stayed with him for six jumps," smiled Bud, "and Bunchgrass is the best rider West of the Dakota line."

Garvin rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Bud, who in —— is this here Smith feller?"

"Got me guessin'," admitted Bud. "He can draw a six-gun so —— fast that yuh can't see it comin'; and if he can use Whistler for a ridin'-horse——"

"I'm bettin' that his name ain't Smith."

"Names don't mean nothin'," grunted Bud. "What did he have to say?"

"Not much. Said he just came up the big coulée."

"Anythin' else?"

"Just some personal remarks."

Bud grinned. He knew that Garvin had questioned Jimmy and that the quick-tongued Irishman had given him some very pointed answers. He felt that Jimmy had not visited the old cabin, but wanted to be sure.

"Wonder if the snow busted in that old cabin in the big coulée?"

"I don't reckon so. Smith said it wasn't fit for anybody to live in, but he didn't say it was busted in."

Bud's eyes narrowed as he looked down at the floor of the stable. Smith had been at the cabin. This was something he had not looked for. He looked up suddenly to see Garvin squinting closely at him, as he said—

"Deal, what about that old cabin in the coulée?"

Bud looked away for a moment and back to Garvin.

"What about it?" Bud glanced around outside the door, as if fearful of being overheard.

"Garvin, what about the money that was cached in that cabin?"

Garvin seemed taken aback at the question, but tried to smile as he said—

"What money?"

"You know —— well what money, Garvin. The night that Whitey Allen got drunk and told about finding all that money under the floor of that cabin, you heard him telling me."

Bud paused and his hand caressed his holster. Garvin only seemed mildly curious, although he was trembling inside.

"You arrested Whitey Allen that night and scared him into givin' you half of it. I waited until mornin' to go out there. Wild Moore saw you arrest Whitey, and went down to the jail——"

"He did not!" denied Garvin.

"No, you didn't see him," admitted Bud, "but he heard yuh talkin', I reckon. Anyway the money was gone when I got there. You and Whitey showed up later, and didn't find it. I reckon that was the money that Wild was payin' out so free just before yuh arrested him."

"Well?" grunted Garvin. "Any harm in that? It must 'a' been the money that feller Devlin stole and planted just before the sheriff caught him. Where is Whitey?"

"I dunno," lied Bud. "He left the country. Do you think that Flint Moore and Wild Moore were the ones that held up the train?"

Garvin laughed softly.

"They are if I can cinch it on to 'em. If I only had that —— gun. Where is it, Bud?"

"—— if I know; but I have an idea. You let things alone out there, Jeff; and mebbe I can find the thing."

"Think it's been hid?"

"That gun," said Bud slowly, "that gun was in that holster when I left for town that mornin'."

"How do you know?"

"I seen it," declared Bud. "I went to the

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door to speak to Flint and I seen the gun there."

Garvin picked up a straw and chewed thoughtfully on it for a while. He twisted his head a trifle and looked keenly at Bud as he said:

"Deal, I reckon we understand each other. You find that gun and turn it over to me before the trial. After that we'll talk business."

Bud's eyes shifted from the sheriff and he turned toward the door.

"You keep out of sight, Garvin. Them —— women won't help matters none by talkin' to Flint and Wild."

Bud started to go out of the door, but turned.

"Suppose Flint Moore swears that he never had that gun on him that day?" he asked.

Garvin grinned.

"Can he prove it?"

"Might—by Wild."

"Fine proof," laughed Garvin. "Don'tcha worry."

"So-long," grunted Bud.

He found Mrs. Moore and Pat ready to go home. He reported that Garvin had not returned, and Pat gave the clothes to Frawley to give to them.

"I'll tell 'em all about yuh bein' in to see 'em," said Frawley, "and if they want to send yuh any word, I'll ride in with it."

"Jud Frawley, you are a darling," declared Pat.

"Aw-w-w!" choked Frawley. "I—I—So-long."

Frawley stood on the sidewalk, hat in hand and watched them drive out of town. For a long time after they had disappeared he still stared down the road. As he turned around he saw Garvin walking between the jail and the office.

Frawley's first impulse was to follow the buck-board and bring them back; but he changed his mind, picked up the bundle of clothes and walked down to the office. Garvin was standing near his desk as Frawley came in. He glared at Frawley, who walked close to him and said:

"I want to see Flint Moore, Jeff. Got some clothes for him."

Garvin shook his head.

"No, I reckon yuh can't."

"Can't I?" Frawley let the bundle drop to the floor, which left his right hand free. "Can't I? You open up that jail and let me in, or I'll make you so —— sick that all the doctors in the country would give yuh up."

"Whatcha want in there?" Garvin's voice was not very strong. He knew that Frawley was no bluffer. "Lemme search that bundle before yuh go in. How do I know yuh ain't got a gun or a file or——"

"Yuh heard what I said, didn't yuh?" asked Frawley.

"You'll get in bad with the law," whined Garvin.

"With you, yuh mean, Garvin. I don't mind."

Garvin opened the rear door and they went across the alley-way to the jail door.

JIMMY spent a bad afternoon at the Box M. He turned the roan back into the corral and sat down in the shade. Jimmy could understand suffering and he knew that Whitey Allen must have went through the tortures of hell during the last fifteen months.

Klooch and her puppy had met him when he arrived, and now the wolf-dog sat on her haunches beside him, with her muzzle on his knee. The puppy chased its tail for a while and curled up at Jimmy's feet. Heat waves danced and shimmered across the hills. Flying grasshoppers buzzed and snapped like tiny fire-crackers. A magpie balanced on a tall, leaning pole, flipping its long tail jerkily and scolding harshly.

A small herd of cattle drifted down a dusty cattle-trail, passing the ranch on their way to water. Opposite the ranch-house they stopped as with one accord, looked curiously toward the house for a moment and went on. They were from far back in the hills, but were drifting down for the earlier grass in the bottoms.

Jimmy noted all these things subconsciously. He wanted to help Whitey Allen. There were many things he wanted to do. The fact that Flint Moore's cartridge belt held only .41 caliber cartridges gave him food for thought. Where was the .41 caliber gun? Perhaps Pat knew. She had hidden the .45.

He shook his head and rubbed Klooch's muzzle.

"I dunno, do you, Klooch? She's a fine tangle, dog. I know that eggs and milk is the proper thing for old Whitey, but I've got to pack 'em to him while no one is lookin' on."

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Jimmy got to his feet and squinted at the sun. It would be sundown in an hour or so.

"I can't find eggs in the dark," he reflected. "If I make the trip at night I better collect the hen-fruit in the light of day."

He walked down to the old barnlike sheds, where chickens scratched in the loose hay.

"I never was familiar with cackle-berries," he stated to the hens, "but I'm hot on the trail of your productions."

He slid the barn-door back and went inside, leaving Klooch and the puppy out in the yard. He searched the mangers and the loose hay, but eggs were scarce. He did not hear the arrival of the buckboard, which brought Bud Deal and the Moore family back to the ranch.

Bud was anxious to find Jimmy and if possible to learn if he had really passed the little cabin in the coulée. He unhitched the team and turned them into the corral. The Whistler was in the corral and Bud noticed the imprint of a saddle still on its back. Jimmy was back, that was sure. He went to the bunk-house.

Pat wondered where Jimmy was. Somehow she wanted to get back to the ranch and see him. She stood on the porch of the ranch-house, looking around. Suddenly she saw Klooch and the puppy, standing near the door to the largest shed, and it flashed into her mind that they were waiting for Jimmy to come out. She went straight down to the door, spoke to Klooch and slid back the door.

Jimmy had found one egg. He put this into his hat, while he continued the search. As he emerged from around a stall partition he almost ran into Pat. He stared at her wonderingly—stared at her as if she had suddenly materialized out of the dusty sunlight shining through the cracks of the log barn.

For a moment Jimmy stared and then remembered the egg. He did not want to explain about the egg, because in explaining about the egg he would have to tell her about Whitey. He shifted the hat partly behind him.

"Sure, I didn't know ye was home so soon," he said nervously. "Did ye just come?"

"A few minutes ago," smiled Pat. "I wondered where you were; but when I saw Klooch and the puppy waiting at the door——"

"Ah, yes, I see. I was just lookin' around the place, Miss. I—I——" Jimmy faltered as he noticed that Pat had glanced at the hat, as if trying to see what was inside.

In desperation he shifted the hat, grasped the top of the tall crown to try and protect the egg, and put it on his head. The stiff crown, crushed around the egg, seemed to hold it firmly for a moment, but Jimmy's heart sank with a sickening thud, as he heard the egg thwack against the top of his head.

"Hot in there," muttered Jimmy weakly. "Mebbe we better go outside."

But Pat was staring at him closely. From under the sweat-band of his hat came a trickle of thick moisture. It slid stickily down his forehead, shifted its course at the bulge of his eyebrow and shot down the bridge of his long nose.

"Have you been hurt?" asked Pat seriously, although her eyes danced.

"Aye," muttered Jimmy, looking cross-eyed at the trickle down his nose.

Then he sniffed quickly.

"From the odors of it, I'm thinkin' the hurt is of long standing, miss."

Pat tried to suppress her mirth, but the effort did not prevent tears from gathering in her tawny eyes and trickling down her cheeks. Jimmy looked at her with unutterable sadness and chagrin, as he said—

"Sure, now, I ask you to please not weep over the misfortunes of an undeserving divil like meself, miss."

Jimmy took off his hat, turned it inside out and slapped it against the partition of the stall, while the bulk of the egg, released from the confines of the sweat-band, cascaded down over his forehead in a shower of yellow yolk.

Pat fairly shrieked at the sight, but Jimmy calmly mopped his head with a handkerchief until it was as free of egg as possible, and then he, too, leaned against the partition and shook with laughter.

"Jimmy, you're a sight for the gods," laughed Jimmy.

"Jimmy, you're a sight for any one," corrected Pat. "Tell me why you put that egg in your hat, will you?"

Jimmy sobered. He had forgotten that it might require an explanation. He walked slowly to the half-open door and went outside. Pat came out behind him

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and the two of them leaned against the door and looked at each other.

"I don't want to lie to you," said Jimmy sadly. "I don't mind lyin' to some folks, but——"

"I don't want you to lie," replied Pat. "If you can't tell me the truth——"

She broke off as Bud Deal came from in front of the bunk-house and crossed over toward the corral. He saw them, but did not stop.

When he was almost to the corral gate he stooped down and picked up a paper, which had been half-ground into the dirt under a horse's hoof. Bud was not over a hundred feet from them. He opened the trampled paper.

Jimmy's hand flashed to his vest pocket and his heart skipped a beat. His mind went back to the bucking roan and he realized that the parole paper had fallen from his pocket during the ride.

Bud did not turn and look toward Jimmy, but put the paper in his pocket and walked to the corral fence, where he looked at the horses, turned and went to the ranch-house.

Pat turned and looked at Jimmy. The lines of his face were deeper than ever and his eyes were squinted as if from deep suffering.

"Jimmy, what is the matter?" asked Pat.

It was the first time she had called him Jimmy, except in jest. He looked at her and shook his head:

"I can't tell ye, Pat. It ain't no hurt that any one can help. I—I kinda forgot meself, I reckon."

"Is it something about Bud Deal?" anxiously.

Jimmy shook his head.

"No—not yet. Aw-w-w, it's nothin' to worry about." Jimmy forced a smile. "Sure, I've got egg smell all over me."

Pat shook her head.

"Jimmy, can't you tell me your troubles? Sometimes it helps to share misery."

"Bless your heart!" exclaimed Jimmy, taking a deep breath. "I've a soul full of misery, but I can't burden your shoulders with it."

"Jimmy, what did you want that egg for?"

Jimmy looked closely at her. He wanted to tell some one. He felt that he could trust Pat to help him and to keep his secret. Somehow he felt as if he had known her for years.

"Pat," he said softly, "I'm tellin' you a secret. Within ten miles of here is an old bunkie of mine, who is dyin' from tuberculosis. He's like an animal, which gets hurted bad and crawls away to die. He don't want me to tell anybody about him, Pat. There's nobody but a drunken Injun to take care of him. I stole that egg to take to him. It—it was the only egg I could find."

"Oh, Jimmy, I'm sorry." Pat's eyes filled with ready tears. "Can't I help you? We'll take him eggs and milk and——"

Pat stopped. Jud Frawley had ridden in past the bunk-house and swung toward them. He took off his hat before he dismounted.

"Jud Frawley, what are you doing out here?" asked Pat.

Frawley half-smiled and glanced from one to the other.

"Jud," said Pat, "this is Mr. Smith. Jimmy, meet Jud Frawley."

They shook hands and Frawley turned to Pat.

"I saw your dad and Wild. They're fine. Shall I put my horse in the corral?"

"Going to stay all night?" asked Pat eagerly.

"I am, if somebody don't run me away," grinned Frawley. "I'm workin' for the Box M now. Flint Moore hired me today. Now I'll put up my horse."

Frawley nodded to Jimmy and led his horse towards the corral gate.

"You'll like him," said Pat. "He was Garvin's deputy, but Garvin fired him. I don't think that Bud is going to like it much though. Jud is just like one of the family. He calls me little Pat, because he used to hold me on his knee."

"Lucky divil," muttered Jimmy.

Pat laughed.

"That was when I was a tiny girl."

"It would be a sweet memory just the same—and after all—" Jimmy shook his head—"I have no memories worth lookin' back at, Pat. I will have—now."

"When you busted an egg on your head, Jimmy?"

"Aye—and talkin' with you about it."

There was silence between them for a few moments and then Pat said—

"Jimmy, when did you discover this old bunkie of yours?"

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"Today. I saddled that hammer-headed roan and happened to run across this feller."

"You rode the Whistler horse?"

"I dunno. Sure, I believe he did whistle. Good horse, after he got tired of buckin'."

"No one has ever ridden the Whistler, Jimmy."

Jimmy led the way to the corral and pointed out the roan. Pat nodded slowly.

"First it's Klooch and then the Whistler. Do you love wild things, Jimmy?"

"Aye."

"Will you sing for me tonight?"

Jimmy looked at her and then away across the hills, where the sunset tinted the western curves of the Thunder Range. His eyes drifted back to her face and he said:

"Would ye hold it against me if I didn't, Pat? I've no heart for a song this night."

"Then some other time, Jimmy?"

"Aye—if there is some other time."

They walked silently to the house. Bud Deal stood in the kitchen door and watched them, a sneer on his lips. He knew that Pat was deeply interested in this wild Irishman; but he knew he could kill that interest very easily now. He was willing to sit back and look on, like a player in a poker game who holds a royal flush, feeling sorry for the puny efforts of his opponents.

Frawley followed them up to the house. Bud scowled at Frawley and wondered what he was doing there. He had not seen Frawley ride in. Mrs. Moore was cooking supper as Jimmy and Pat came in, with Frawley close behind them. Bud sauntered in, nodding curtly to Frawley. Mrs. Moore looked at Frawley, and he grinned widely.

"Another boarder, Mrs. Moore," boomed Frawley. "I'm a hired cowpuncher now—hired out to the Box M."

"Well, bless my soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Moore. "Now, that's fine, Jud. You got into the jail and——"

"I sure did," nodded Frawley. "Both feelin' fine, but dog-goned sorry that yuh didn't get to see 'em."

"Who hired you, Frawley?" asked Bud.

"Flint Moore."

Bud bit the edge of his lips, staring down at the floor. When Wild Moore had been arrested the first time Bud had been made foreman of the ranch. Since then nothing had been said to change his standing. Flint Moore had told him to discharge Whitey Allen, because there was not enough work for an extra man. Now, Flint Moore had hired Frawley, without consulting Bud, and Frawley was the last man Bud would ever have hired.

Bud glanced up at Frawley and turned to look at Jimmy.

"Well, I don't *sabe* the idea, Frawley. There ain't work for so many punchers around here. Flint told me to hire Smith; but I reckon I'll have to let him go now."

Frawley's eyes were upon Pat, while Bud was talking, and a quizzical expression flashed across his face. Frawley could read emotion, and he knew that Pat did not want this Smith person to leave the Box M.

HE GLANCED at Jimmy, who was leaning against the side of the doorway, slowly rolling a cigaret. There was a bit of sadness about his homely face. Frawley noted the heavy gun hanging at his thigh; the easy pose of his muscular body. Frawley knew men, and he knew that this man was a born fighter. He looked at Bud, whose swarthy face was undeniably handsome; his body as lithe as the frame of a greyhound. Frawley half-shook his head as he turned from Bud, as if discarding him in his mental choice.

"I don't reckon that anybody will have to go," said Frawley slowly. "Flint Moore knowed that Smith was here."

"The business can't stand it!" Bud's voice snapped.

Frawley rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Well, Bud, you can use yore own judgment. Smith stays, if he wants to."

"Yeah?" Bud looked quickly at Frawley. "Well, whatcha know about that? How long you been runnin' this ranch?"

Frawley slowly drew out a massive silver watch and peered at the dial.

"Lemme see. About four or five hours."

"What do yuh mean?"

"Flint Moore asked me to take charge of the ranch until he got back."

Bud did not say a word; but his heart sank within him. What did this mean? Had there been a leak somewhere that had caused Flint Moore to hire a man over him? Bud glanced at Pat and saw her half-smiling at Jimmy.

Bud's temper flashed hot in his black eyes, but he shut his teeth hard. In his pocket he had the evidence that would disrate Jimmy in the eyes of Patricia Moore. For a moment he struggled against his temper, fighting back the impulse to unmask Jimmy

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Devlin. No, he would wait and see what the law did with Flint and Wild Moore. If there were not sufficient evidence to hold them he would turn the parole over to Garvin. It would show that Devlin had lied about his name, and Devlin would have to prove his whereabouts at the time of the robbery. Bud forced a smile and sat down at the table.

"I talked with Flint about that pearl-handled six-gun," said Frawley.

No one made any comment and Frawley did not continue.

Pat went out on the front porch. No one could see her from the dining-room, as she went softly down the porch steps and down to the bunk-house, where she quickly threw aside the boards of the little lumber pile. The gun was not there.

She went back to the porch, where she sat down and tried to think. Who had seen her put the gun under that lumber? Bud had not been there. Jimmy and Garvin were the only two who could have taken it. But perhaps someone had found it later. She wondered dully whether Garvin had the gun and would exhibit it as evidence at the hearing.

She wondered why Jimmy had suddenly seemed hurt. One moment he had been light-hearted, with a laugh on his lips, and the next moment he had seemed to grow old with suffering.

She could hear the rattling of dishes in the dining-room as the men ate their dinner, but there was little or no conversation. In a little while Bud Deal came out carrying his hat. Pat glanced up at him, but he was busy with his own thoughts. Frawley drifted to the doorway, filling his pipe, and Bud glanced back at him.

"Reckon I'll ride to town tonight," observed Bud and walked down the steps, going straight to the corral.

He seemed to walk very straight, holding his head high.

"Kinda knocked the starch out of Bud, I reckon," observed Frawley slowly. "But it'll all come out in the wash."

Jimmy came out and stood at the edge of the porch, looking down toward the corral, where Bud was saddling his sorrel. Pat glanced up at Jimmy. There was nothing of the devil-may-care expression left to his features. His eyes were narrowed to mere slits and the lines of his homely face were like carved flint.

Suddenly he jerked away from the railing, walked down the steps and went straight toward Bud Deal.

Pat got to her feet as if to follow him, but Frawley spoke softly and she stopped.

"Easy, little Pat. I dunno what it's about, but——"

Bud Deal turned as Jimmy came up to him and they looked into each others eyes at close range. Pat and Frawley could see that Bud was speaking, but no words came to them.

Suddenly Bud seemed to jerk away and reach for his gun. Bud was the fastest man in the Thunder Range with a gun. But Jimmy's move was as quick as Bud's—quicker, because his left fist caught Bud under the chin, while Bud's gun was only half-way out of its holster.

Bud dropped in a heap. The sorrel whirled sidewise against the side of the corral, snorting and trying to break away. Jimmy seemed to drop almost as quickly as Bud, and to the two people on the porch he seemed to be holding Bud against further action. But he got to his feet and backed away from Bud, as he removed the cartridges from Bud's gun and replaced it in its holster.

Bud rolled over, got slowly to his feet and looked at Jimmy, who handed him the cartridges. Pat and Frawley were unable to hear what either of them were saying. Bud got to his feet, rubbed his chin, as if it pained him greatly, and untied his horse. Without a backward glance he rode out of the ranch-house gate and headed for town.

Jimmy had asked Bud for the parole paper, which he had found; but Bud refused even to admit that he had found such a paper. Bud had said that it was kind of Jimmy to admit that he was a paroled thief, and that Pat would love to know it.

Anyway, Jimmy had the paper in his possession again. He walked slowly back to the porch, where Pat and Frawley waited for him.

"Sure, I'm sorry there had to be an audience," said Jimmy sadly, and then to Frawley: "I'm thinkin' I'd better be goin' along, Mr. Frawley. The Box M don't owe me any salary."

"Go away?" asked Pat quickly.

Frawley sucked on his pipe and his eyes twinkled as he looked at them.

"Aye. There's good reasons, ma'am."

"My name is Pat—Jimmy."

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Jimmy smiled at her.

"And there's no better on earth."

"I don't reckon there's any need of yuh leavin' us," observed Frawley. "Stay a while, anyway."

Frawley yawned and went back into the house, where he started a conversation with Mrs. Moore. Jimmy seemed to be smiling at his own thoughts and looked to see Pat looking at him.

"Feel better now, Jimmy?"

"Aye. But I have no right to be here—to talk with ye, Pat. It ain't right, except within me heart, which only knows about me. Ye wonder why I clouted Bud Deal, and I don't want to tell ye. For the life of me I can't, Pat. It won't be long until ye know. Sure, it's been like Heaven to me—this knowin' all of ye; givin' me somethin' to look back at in the years to come."

"But you are not going away, Jimmy."

"Not tonight, at any rate," smiled Jimmy.

Pat nodded as she looked down at the big gun in Jimmy's holster. Jimmy looked down at the gun and up at her.

"Did you have that gun when you came here?" asked Pat.

Jimmy smiled softly.

"I never lie to my friends, Pat. Never hide anythin' and let a pup see you hide it. It arouses their curiosity."

"But—" faltered Pat.

"Aye," nodded Jimmy. "I am at this moment sittin' on two pieces of pearl, which repose serenely in me hip-pockets."

Mrs. Moore came to the door and called:

"You folks had better come in the house. It's getting chilly out there. Maybe Mr. Smith will sing for us."

Pat smiled at him and repeated her mother's question, with her eyes. Jimmy got slowly to his feet.

"I have it in me heart to sing—now."

VIII

BUD DEAL rode away from the Box M in a daze. He was unable to explain things to himself. Jimmy's blow had come like a flash of bright lights. He had expected Jimmy to reach for a gun, and his eyes had flashed to Jimmy's right hand, leaving Jimmy the chance he needed to send over a knock-out punch.

Bud realized before he got to his feet that Jimmy had taken that paper from his pocket; but now he searched his pockets to be sure. It was gone. He drew up his horse and looked back toward the Box M, already blotted out in the shadows of night.

Pat and Frawley had both seen what happened, and the humiliation burned deeply in Bud's soul. He had the reputation of being the fastest gunman in the country. Bud had whipped bigger men than Smith with bare hands. Now this soft-spoken Irishman had ignored his swift gun-play and knocked him down with his fist, taken away his gun and given it back—empty. All in the presence of the girl he meant to marry.

Instead of going toward Oxbow he swung off the road and headed toward the Devil's Pulpit. It was dark now, but he needed no light, and the sure-footed sorrel picked its own trail.

Far off in a cañon an owl hooted, like a distant railroad engine whistling for a clear signal. A wild-cat padded its way across an open space, a gray shadow which snarled and was gone. A coyote silhouetted for a moment against the sky-line of a butte and faded out.

The Devil's Pulpit showed black against the sky-line, its eastern side a sheer drop of a hundred feet into the brushy coulée. Bud rode in at the top of the coulée and went down into the brush, following a cattle-trail, until he came in at the rear of the tiny cabin. A faint glow of a candle through the chinks between the logs showed him that the occupants were awake, although there were no voices to be heard.

The door was open, which emitted a faint glow of light. Bud dismounted near the door.

"This is Bud," he called softly, and a voice inside said, "Come in."

Whitey was propped up in bed, his face gray and drawn in the flickering light from the one candle on the table. The Indian was not there. On the bed beside Whitey lay a Winchester rifle and a Colt pistol.

"How yuh feelin'?" asked Bud.

"How in —— do yuh expect a feller to feel?" asked Whitey hoarsely. "Nothin' to eat, —— little to drink and a Injun for a nurse. I suppose yo're sorry I'm alive."

"Cut out that kinda talk!" snapped Bud. "I've done all I could, Whitey. Yuh got to figure that I couldn't sneak over here every day. Pretty near able to get up?"

"I dunno how able I am," grunted

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Whitey, "but I know —— well I'm goin' to get up pretty soon. That bullet busted a rib, and I don't think there's any lead in my lung. Must 'a' kinda horned in and out, bustin' the rib. Rib stuck in me, I reckon. Now, tell me what's new."

Bud told him of the arrest of Flint and Wild Moore for the robbery of the train.

"Aw, ——!" grunted Whitey. "Why didn't Garvin pick on somebody else. It's a cinch they can't convict Flint Moore."

"It saves further investigation," grinned Bud. "By the time they're cleared, the trail will be cold. Somethin' else, Whitey. The money you found under the floor of this shack was the money Devlin was sent up for stealin'."

Whitey looked keenly at Bud. The flickering candle light made a grotesque shadow behind him on the wall. A huge moth fluttered in out of the dark and almost extinguished the candle.

"You remember hearin' about Devlin, don't yuh?" asked Bud.

"Yeah. It was his money, eh? Well, what of it?"

"He's near here, Whitey. I gave him a job on the Box M. Said his name was Smith. He'll be lookin' for the money, I reckon. Mebbe he forgot just where he put it, 'cause he was ridin' this way, lookin' around, I reckon."

"He was sent up for three years, wasn't he?" asked Whitey.

"Paroled," grunted Bud, rubbing his sore chin. "He's my ace-in-the-hole. If they don't cinch Flint and Wild Moore, I'll bet I can lay the deadwood on Devlin."

"Why lay it on anybody?" croaked Whitey. "You better keep out of it, Bud. You git too —— anxious and folks will be wonderin' why. You keep your mouth shut."

Bud grunted. He did not like Whitey's tone. Anyway, Bud was getting nervous.

"The engineer recognized that pearl-handled gun," said Bud, but added quickly, "I mean he got a good look at it, and that's the evidence that Garvin is lookin' for."

"Where is it, Bud?"

"—— if I know. The sheriff had taken 'em to jail when I got back that night; so I hooked Flint's .41 and slipped the .45 in its place. When Garvin tried to find it, the danged thing was gone."

"Looks kinda funny," observed Whitey. "Who'd take it, do yuh suppose?"

Bud shook his head slowly, deep in thought. Suddenly he rubbed his hand across his face.

"By ——! I wonder if that could be it? Whitey, that Devlin is packin' a .45 and he only had six shells. No, that one has plain wood-handles."

"What's the idea?" croaked Whitey.

"He wanted more shells," mused Bud aloud. "Pat got the old man's belt—the one he wore that day—and it was full of .41 cartridges. They can prove that the old man was packin' a .41."

"The fireman was killed with a .45?" queried Whitey.

Bud nodded.

"That's why we need that pearl-handled .45."

"Well, I'm —— glad his blood ain't on my hands," said Whitey thankfully.

"Shut up!" snapped Bud nervously. "You're as much to blame as I am. Anyway, he shot you, didn't he? I didn't think he'd be able to do anything, after the clout I gave him with that gun-barrel."

"I'm glad I didn't kill him," repeated Whitey. "I've never killed anybody, Bud. I thought I was goin' to die here alone, and I was afraid I had killed him. He fell back into the gangway of that engine——"

Came a slight sound at the doorway, and the figure of a man bulked grotesquely in the dim light. Bud Deal seemed to sway sidewise and from his hip flashed a stream of orange flame, followed by the crash of a pistol.

The candle swayed in its insecure foundation of melted wax and fell to the floor from the concussion of the heavy pistol and the crash of a falling body.

For a moment or two there was silence, broken only by the labored breathing of the two men.

"Light a—a match!" breathed Whitey jerkily.

Bud broke several matches, trying to scratch one. The yellow flame seemed weak and nearly flickered out again as Bud recovered the candle and applied the match. Both men looked toward the door, where the man sprawled flat on his face, just inside.

Bud went slowly over to him and held the candle closer.

"That —— Injun!" he grunted. "The Injun, Whitey."

"Killed him?" croaked Whitey.

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Bud examined him closely by the candle-light and got to his feet.

"Almost between the eyes, Whitey. He never knowed what hit him."

"More blood," muttered Whitey weakly. "More blood. What did yuh shoot him for, Bud?"

"—— him, he came sneakin' in. Didn't he? I didn't know who he was. It was his own fault, Whitey—wasn't it?"

"You shot too quick," complained Whitey. "Now, what will yuh do?"

"Quit your croakin'!" ordered Bud. "Let me think, can't yuh?"

Bud sat down on the edge of the bunk, half-turned from Whitey, who slid down lower on his bunk, with one hand over the butt of his six-shooter. Somehow, Whitey had the feeling that Bud wanted him out of the way, too.

BUT Whitey and Bud were not the only ones to hear the report of Bud's pistol. Sheriff Garvin was doing a little night prowling on his own account. His talk with Bud had showed him that Bud had guilty knowledge of who had robbed that train and where the money was hid.

There had been considerable mention of the little cabin in the brushy coulée below the Devil's Pulpit. While Garvin was very willing to arrest the guilty parties, he was also more than willing to get in on the plunder—if he could do it in a way which would not cause trouble for him.

He had been perfectly willing to take his share of the money, which Whitey was purported to have found under the floor of that cabin. In fact, he had coerced Whitey into a promise of a fifty-fifty split. But Whitey had talked too much, and some one had lifted the cache ahead of them. There was no question that this some one was Wild Moore.

Now, he was on a little tour of investigation. He had ridden to the top of the ridge on the east side of the Pulpit and was gazing down into the coulée, a dark mass in the dim light, when the report of Bud's pistol came floating up to him.

But for this shot, Garvin would have probably spent the night in the shelter of the Pulpit, where he could watch any early morning action in the coulée. He listened closely for a while and then rode slowly down the side of the coulée, picking his way carefully, until he reached the heavy brush of the bottom.

He dismounted and stood beside his horse for a while. It was very dark down there, and Garvin was not entirely sure just where the cabin was located. It was very still in the thick brush. Garvin was not always a coward; but he recognized his limitations. He could not move silently in this brush, and he could not afford to make a noise.

He heard the nicker of a horse and grasped the muzzle of his own mount just in time to stop it from making a reply. This nicker came from further up the coulée and to the left.

Garvin spent an anxious half-hour, listening for more sounds, but none came. Then he left his horse and began moving slowly up the coulée, taking a few steps and waiting silently for a full minute. Garvin was cautious.

Suddenly he touched a fence. His hand moved along the horizontal pole until he reached a post. He knew that he was at the little corral, and by following this fence a short distance he could reach the cabin. Going to the left would bring him to the front of the cabin, so he decided to travel to the right and make his approach from the rear.

He went carefully until he reached the corner of the cabin. He could see no lights nor hear any sounds, but his nostrils could detect the faint odors of recent cooking. He moved about half-way of the rear of the cabin, when he heard the sounds of some one coming from up the coulée. Whoever it was, they were not moving cautiously. He could hear the swish and breaking of brush and the heavy footfalls of a horse, and suddenly the bulk of a horse and rider seemed almost to move into him.

Garvin flattened himself against the cabin, gun in hand, as the horse and rider passed him and went to the front of the cabin.

He could hear the man dismount and go into the cabin.

The cabin had been chinked with the usual pieces of split wood and mud, which had fallen away in places, but Garvin seemed unable to find an opening large enough to give him a view of the interior, even after the occupant had lit the candle. He could hear their conversation, which was worth as much to Garvin as a view of the men.

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"Well, that's fixed." Garvin recognized Bud Deal's voice. "Nobody can hang that on to us, Whitey."

Garvin grinned to himself when Bud called Whitey by name, and listened closely for a reply.

"Mebbe not," croaked Whitey. "Who's goin' to take care of me now?"

"I dunno," grunted Bud, "but it's a cinch you've got to get out of here. Yuh can't let Devlin find yuh here."

Garvin's left ear suffered from compression, as he leaned closer to the rough log. His mind flashed to the notice of parole and he wondered where Devlin figured in on this deal—and where he was now.

"Where'll I go?" asked Whitey weakly. "Yuh can't get a hole shot in yore lung and keep changin' yore residence every little while, Bud."

For a while there was silence, broken by Whitey's question.

"Bud, you ain't touched that sack, have yuh?"

"Naw! You know —— well I ain't. What chance have I had to touch it?"

"I dunno, Bud. All I ask is that yuh shoot square with me. We're fifty-fifty on this, yuh remember. I git to wonderin' about it and— Bud, yuh don't suppose anybody is liable to find it, do yuh?"

Bud snorted his disgust at Whitey's fears.

"Find it? Who in —— would ever climb to the point of the Devil's Pulpit? Do yuh think anybody would cross all that slide-rock and pick that one little spot?"

"You done the hidin'," said Whitey slowly. "I didn't see yuh put it away, Bud."

"Well, it's where I said it was. Right where the point comes down in the coulée, where the solid rock goes into the ground at the edge of the slide. There's a hollow kinda underneath that point. ——! That money could stay there a million years and nobody would ever find it."

Garvin smiled to himself, and listened for more disclosures, which did not come. Finally Bud got to his feet.

"I dunno just what we're goin' to do, Whitey. You get along as well as yuh can and I'll see yuh tomorrow night. Flint Moore hired Jud Frawley, —— him! Made him foreman. He suspects somethin', I think; so I've got to be careful. I'm supposed to be in town now, so I reckon I better go there to be able to prove where I was. Can't take a chance on a —— thing now. Just as soon as yo're able—we'll drift."

Garvin was unable to get Whitey's reply. He heard Bud mount his horse and a moment later he rode past the rear of the cabin, passing close to Garvin, and disappeared in the night. Garvin moved away from the cabin, circled the corral and went back to his horse.

Garvin had learned a lot of things. He knew that Bud and Whitey had held up the train and killed the fireman and that Whitey had been wounded. He knew where the money was concealed, unless, of course, Bud had lied to Whitey.

He knew that Smith was Devlin. Garvin grinned to himself as he felt his way back to his horse. There was only one thing that he did not know, and that was the cause of the shot he had heard. From the conversation, he would deduct that Bud had been there a short time previous, and for some reason had come back.

Garvin reached his horse and swung into the saddle. He could look almost straight up at the rim of the Devil's Pulpit, an inky blot against the sparkle of the stars. At the foot of this, where the angle of the cliff broke at right-angles, like the corner of a sky-scraper, was twenty thousand dollars.

"Twenty thousand!" grunted Garvin aloud, trying to visualize that great amount. "Why worry about re-election?"

He spurred his horse down the coulée, where he could strike the gentle slope, leading back to the top. He wanted to get his hands on that treasure sack; but he had no desire to grope his way over treacherous sliderock and brush-tangle in the dark. Tomorrow would be another day.

THE following morning at breakfast, Jud Frawley lost no time in assuming command of the Box M.

"Mrs. Moore wants to go to town today and see if she can see the folks, and I'll take her in. Bud, you make a circle in the Squaw Creek country and kinda estimate what's in there. Lot of cattle Wintered in there last year, and Flint's kinda anxious to find out how many of the Box M are scattered in there."

Frawley turned to Jimmy.

"Smith, there's a lot of work here to do. Yuh might look over the corrals, for one thing. Lot of posts need resettin'. Bunkhouse needs cleanin'. Dump the straw out

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of them ticks and fill 'em up again. Danged if I like to sleep on a hard straw-tick."

"Pat goin' in with yuh?" asked Bud.

"No."

Frawley gave no reasons for Pat staying at the ranch. Bud got up from the table, and without a word to any one, went straight to the corral. Mrs. Moore and Pat were in another part of the house, when Bud rode back and dismounted at the porch.

"Want the field-glasses," he grunted, as he lifted them from the wall, where they hung in their leather case.

Frawley and Jimmy came out on the porch as Bud rode away. The butt of a rifle protruded from the scabbard under his right knee.

"Mebbe he thinks he might run across a bear up there," observed Frawley. "Wild country up there, Smith."

Jimmy nodded over his cigaret. Frawley looked curiously at him and said—

"I don't reckon that Bud Deal's got a great lot of use for either one of us, Smith."

"I'm thinkin' there's a world of truth in that," said Jimmy seriously.

"Yuh don't think much of him yourself, do yuh?"

Jimmy lit his cigaret and inhaled deeply.

"Mister Frawley, it takes all kinds of people to make a world, and Bud is just one of the kinds. I don't hate him, because—" Jimmy scratched his chin, as if searching for words to describe his point. "Sure, there's only the thickness of a cigaret paper between love and hate; but ye don't love any one who means nothin' to ye. Neither can ye hate a man, who—who ye never could love. To love or hate, ye must feel that the person has a soul, which I can't feel of our *compadre* Bud."

"Pat is goin' to marry him, I hear."

Jimmy did not look at Frawley, who watched him closely; but there was only a sudden tightening of the muscles of Jimmy's mouth, which might have been caused by holding the cigaret, the smoke of which drifted unminded into his eyes.

Jimmy slowly removed the cigaret, crushed it carefully between his thumb and finger and let the contents sift to the floor of the porch.

"I'll be goin' to work now," said Jimmy slowly, and went down the steps.

He found a crow-bar and a shovel and selected the far side of the corral to start operations. He saw Frawley hitch up the team to the buckboard and drive up to the house; and later he saw them leaving for Oxbow. It was getting hot; but Jimmy dug savagely at the rocky soil. A number of the posts were tottering—rotted away at the ground.

"You boomer!" he told himself savagely. "You paroled thief! What right have ye to care for anybody? Go on away from here and forget such fool ideas. Bud Deal must be all right, or she wouldn't think of marryin' him."

Jimmy sent the sharp end of the heavy crow-bar deep into the gravel, twisting and turning it as if it weighed only a few ounces.

"Are you going to enlarge the corral, Jimmy?"

He turned his sweat-streaked face and looked at Pat, who had come unnoticed and was leaning against the fence, watching him curiously. He glanced down at the post-hole and suddenly realized that he had dug at least two feet away from the original hole.

"Aye," he muttered foolishly, and broke into a grin. "Sure, me mind is not broad enough to handle the north end of a crow-bar and play civil engineer at the same time. Why did ye not go to town?"

"I wanted to help you gather eggs, Jimmy. You haven't forgotten your sick friend, have you?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"No, I've not; but Mister Frawley mapped out me day's work and I must be doin' it."

"Suppose," smiled Pat confidentially, "suppose I was the one who mapped out the work, Jimmy. Jud won't expect to find much done when he gets back, but he won't mention it."

"Ye—ye framed it to stay with me?" Jimmy wiped his face with his sleeve. "Why did ye do that, Pat?"

"I wanted to help you."

He shook his head slowly.

"Ye shouldn't 'a' done it, Pat. Sure, I appreciate it, y' betcha; but bein' here all alone with me, and ridin' into the hills——"

"What do you mean?" demanded Pat.

"Frawley told me!" Jimmy was closely examining the crow-bar—"Frawley told me about you—and Bud Deal."

"Oh!" softly. "And you—you respected his rights?"

Jimmy looked up quickly.

"I'd thank him to respect mine."

Pat stepped over and put her hand on his arm.

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"Jimmy, I—I think you are the squarest shooter I ever met. Jud Frawley is only the foreman of this ranch. If you don't think I am the boss—ask Jud or dad. Now, let's go and find those eggs."

Jimmy stared at her for a moment and his hand went to the brim of his sombrero in a half-salute.

"I never dispute me commandin' officer. We'll rustle the eggs."

Pat had already "rustled" the eggs and had made up a compact bundle of eggs, jam, pickles and fresh bread to take to the sick man. Jimmy saddled her horse, a brown mare, and put a saddle on the Whistler, while Pat stood aside, expecting the notorious outlaw to show its true colors again. But Whistler submitted quietly to the saddle and only acted a trifle stubborn after Jimmy had settled into the saddle.

They rode out of the main gate, swung a trifle southeast and crossed Leloo Creek, from where they climbed a sloping hog-back ridge.

About a mile from the ranch-house, in almost the same place where Garvin and Frawley had watched the place on the day of the robbery, sat Bud Deal, with his field-glasses, watching the ranch. Bud had felt sure that Devlin had been to that cabin; but Whitey had not intimated a thing that would corroborate his suspicions. If Devlin had cached that money under the cabin floor he would most surely search for it, and would find Whitey.

Bud scowled through the glasses as he watched Jimmy and Pat ride up the ridge, and as soon as they were out of sight he mounted and rode swiftly down past the ranch-house and into the hills, following them.

Jimmy and Pat traveled slowly along the ridge and swung around the head of a draw, which led back to Leloo Creek. This brought them in on the right-hand side of the big coulée and across the coulée from Devil's Pulpit.

A light wind swept the hills, rippling the grass and flowers as it might ripple a great lake of gaudy colors. Jimmy and Pat had done little talking, as it was almost impossible to ride side by side; but when they struck the flat country, Jimmy spurred up beside her and both horses fell into a slow walk.

"Sure, this is God's country," said Jimmy. "Did ye ever see so much color? 'Tis skies of blue, a breeze like the perfumed breath of the gods and a flower garden from Paradise."

"Yes," nodded Pat, "and in the Winter?"

"Aye. But for every love there's a hate, Pat."

"I suppose so, Jimmy. Poor old dad. Hundreds of cows lost in the big blizzard, which means thousands of dollars. Still he doesn't complain. Now, he's in jail, and the law says he must stay there until—Jimmy, what in the world is that?"

Pat pointed at the brushy side of a small coulée, where a weird figure had appeared. It was the figure of a man, standing with arms outstretched, as if invoking the gods. His clothes were almost all torn from his body and his face was an indistinguishable mass, which looked like blood and dirt.

They rode in closer, but the figure gave them no heed.

"Why, it's old Indian Jim!" exclaimed Pat. "What in the world is the matter with him?"

Jimmy spurred in closer and peered at the Indian. His hair and the upper part of his half-naked body was crusted with blood and dirt, and his chest and arms had been scratched deeply from mesquite snags.

"What in the divil happened to ye?" asked Jimmy.

The old Indian turned slowly and seemed to see them for the first time. He moved slowly backward, with arms still outstretched, whirled suddenly and bounded across the coulée, screeching like a panther. Over the far side he went, running swiftly, and disappeared into another ravine, which led into the big coulée at the foot of Devil's Pulpit.

"Crazy as a March hare!" grunted Jimmy. "He's been hurt in the head, I'm thinkin'. What do ye make of it?"

Pat shook her head. "I do not know, Jimmy. Old Jim always seemed sane; but he would do anything for a drink of liquor. Perhaps he got drunk and hurt himself."

"By golly, that's the Injun who was takin' care of my sick friend!" exclaimed Jimmy to himself. "I wonder if somethin' has happened to him. Ye never can trust a drunken Injun—nor a drunken white man, for that matter."

THEY rode on toward the rim of the big coulée, watching for another glimpse of the Indian. A dense patch of brush masked their approach to the edge. Jimmy tied the horses in the

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brush and he and Pat walked out to where they could get almost a bird's-eye view of the coulée. Across from them was Devil's Pulpit, and below, hidden in the brush, was the little cabin. From their elevation they could see the sweep of open country at the head of the coulée, and to the right the hills swept off to the blue haze of Bitter River.

A drifting herd of cattle went slowly along the sky-line to the left and far behind the Pulpit. An eagle circled high in the air; without visible movement, like a bird-figure suspended on invisible wires. Far down the coulée a blue-jay chattered violently at intervals.

"A picture of peace," muttered Jimmy softly, "but down in that brush is a half-naked war-whoop, without brains enough to know sic 'em. Mostly always peace is like that, Pat. Ye never can tell by the label."

Pat nodded absently, squinting across the coulée.

"Jimmy, look over at the bottom of the Pulpit. Look at the spot near where the rock comes to the brush. See the place, which looks like the corner of a building?"

"Aye," grunted Jimmy. "Now what do ye suppose any man would want there?"

The tiny figure of a man was plainly visible, as he came down along the side of the Pulpit. For a few moments he disappeared, as he entered a heavy growth of brush, but reappeared again closer to the corner. At that distance it was impossible to see just what he was doing, as he blended with the rocks and foliage. But very soon he was retracing his steps, going back toward the top of the ridge.

"That wasn't the Injun," declared Jimmy. "He could not get there so soon."

"Shall we go on down to the cabin?" asked Pat.

"I've a hunch to stop here a while," smiled Jimmy, and added, "and anyway, I'm goin' down there alone, Pat."

"I am going with you," declared Pat.

"I've had little experience with women," said Jimmy seriously, "but they do tell me they're not open to conviction, so I'll not argue with any of them."

Jimmy looked back across the coulée. The figure of a mounted man was riding down the right-hand side of the ridge, which led from the pulpit—far enough back to conceal him from any one in the coulée, but visible to Pat and Jimmy. They watched him finally ride down into the coulée, far below the little cabin.

At times they could see him through the trees and brush, and it appeared that he was crossing the coulée and heading toward them. He passed out of sight into one of the draws on their side.

Jimmy turned and looked toward the head of the coulée. A wild range steer, like a tiny silhouette, was trotting along the sky-line, and in a few moments they were able to distinguish a horse and rider coming over the sky-line behind the steer, but the rider came down the hill instead of keeping to the sky-line.

"Some one else is comin'," grunted Jimmy, pointing out the rider to Pat. "We'll be havin' a quorum soon, I'm thinkin'."

"Is it just a chance, or is there a reason, Jimmy?"

"I dunno, Pat. These two won't meet. Anyway, it's interestin' to sit here and make bugaboos and bloodthirsty men out of ordinary, hard-workin' range riders. Sure, I love to build me own heroes and villains. It's the Irish in me which loves to see a bomb behind every bunch of chin-whiskers or to picture a colored waiter as a head-huntin' Dyak, sneaking softly down through the steamin' jungle, instead of a perfectly harmless hired man, comin' between tables with a bowl of steamin' mulligan."

"You are a dreamer, Jimmy," smiled Pat. "And still you whipped Bud Deal."

"Is he hard to whip?"

"They say he has never met his match with fists or a gun."

"Well, now," smiled Jimmy, "I shall try me best to be afraid of him. Sure, I didn't know about him."

Pat looked at Jimmy and shook her head slowly.

"You will have to try real hard, I think. You had no trouble with Klooch and you rode Whistler—and knocked Bud Deal down, when he started to draw his gun."

"He wasn't lookin' for it, Pat. Mebbe we'd make a real pretty fight—I dunno. I'm sure I don't—sh-h-h!"

The sound of a walking horse drifted to their ears. It was passing between them and their horses, from the sound. Then, through an opening in the brush, they saw Jeff Garvin, riding slowly. He had something in front of him in the saddle. He

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passed out of sight, and a moment later there was no sound from his horse.

Jimmy raised up slowly and motioned to Pat to remain where she was. He wormed his way around through the brush for about fifty feet, where he could see Garvin, sitting motionless on his horse and looking toward the head of the coulée.

Jimmy turned his head. The other rider was coming slowly to the edge of the coulée, and Jimmy recognized Bud Deal's sorrel. He glanced back at Garvin, who turned his horse back into the brush and dismounted. For the space of a full minute he remained motionless. Just in front of him was a small ravine, full of rocks and brush, and Garvin seemed to be considering this spot. Finally he took what looked like a dirty canvas sack and went over to this little ravine.

It took him some time to select a certain spot, after which he appeared to conceal the sack. Then he got to his feet, gazed for a few moments toward the horse and rider far beyond, and then went back to his horse, where he waited until Bud Deal had disappeared in the brush.

Garvin seemed undecided about which way to go, but finally rode into the brush, heading toward the spot where Bud had disappeared.

Jimmy slipped back to Pat and motioned for her to follow him. He told her nothing; but led her to the little ravine, where, from under a pile of rocks, which looked as if they had been in place for centuries, he drew out the canvas sack.

"Our friend Garvin hid it," grinned Jimmy, as he unwound the string and peered inside. "Holy smoke! Would ye look at this, Pat?"

He opened the sack for her inspection, and she gazed wide-eyed at a jumble of yellow-backed currency and minted gold. The sack would weigh about twenty pounds, but the bulk of the money seemed to be in currency.

"What is it?" gasped Pat, staring at Jimmy.

"Unless me thoughts are wanderin', that's the money which was stole from the train. The sheriff has your father and brother in jail for the deed, while he goes around hidin' it. Can ye beat that for inconsistency?"

Pat looked blankly at the money and Jimmy grinned up at her.

"I wonder if Garvin was one—sure, that was him at the foot of the Pulpit. Now, I'm beginnin' to see a bit clearer."

"What will we do with it, Jimmy?" nervously.

Jimmy stood up with the sack in his hands, and looked around.

"We'll shock Mister Garvin, I'm thinkin'. Come on."

He led the way back to where they had sat, and picked a spot near the edge, where he placed the sack under the side of a large granite outcropping and covered it with other rocks. When he had finished the job, no one would ever suspect that the rocks had been placed there by human hands.

"Remember this place, Pat," said Jimmy seriously. "Ye may have to find it alone. We want that money to go back to it's rightful owners."

"Why will I have to find it alone, Jimmy?"

"I only say that ye may, Pat. Life is uncertain, ye know."

"But this robbery does not concern you. There is no danger for you, Jimmy—is there?"

"The good Lord only knows, and He ain't exposin' nothin' to mortal man, little Pat. Let's quit arguin' and do a bit o' lookin'."

They moved back to the rim of the coulée, where they could remain concealed, yet be in a position to watch the whole sweep of country.

IX

BUD DEAL was worried. He had intended to keep Pat and Jimmy in sight, but had missed them; for the reason that they had swung around to the right of the Pulpit. He had no idea of what he was going to do, but he wanted to be sure what they did.

Something seemed to be pulling him down to the cabin. A premonition that all was not well down there annoyed him. He did not want to run into Pat and Jimmy, because it might be difficult to explain what he was doing down there, when Frawley had sent him the opposite direction from the Box M.

Bud's conscience did not bother him over the shooting of the Indian. He had loaded him on his horse, taken him back up the coulée and dumped him in the brush down in a deep, dry water-course. Anyway, thought Bud, old Jim was worthless, and

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his demise would save the price of many quarts of liquor. Old Jim knew too much anyway.

Bud rode slowly down into the coulée, watching closely for any sign of Pat and Jimmy. It was almost a sure thing that Devlin would not take Pat with him when he tried to recover the missing money, so Bud felt fairly safe in going down there. Suddenly he had a curiosity to take a look at the Indian's body and see it if was well-enough hidden.

He left his horse on the old cattle-trail and went on foot through the brush to the edge of the deep wash-out, where he leaned over the edge and peered down.

The Indian's body was not there. Bud stepped back from the edge and glanced quickly around. This was the place. He looked again, leaning closer and examining the white boulders at the bottom. On one was a dark stain.

Bud straightened up and leaned back against the trunk of a small tree. Who had found the Indian? Did some one see the deed and remove the body? For a moment Bud's nerve oozed out of his finger-tips; but he snapped back to normal, dangerous as a tiger.

He walked back to his horse, going softly as an Indian, his eyes sweeping every inch of the woods. The blow of not finding the body of his victim had dulled his sensibilities, but had sharpened his caution. Some one knew.

He rode slowly down through the brush, gun in hand. Just before he came out into the tiny clearing at the rear of the cabin, he drew up his horse and watched. A pair of magpies flew from the corral fence and lit on the peak of the cabin, where they fluffed their feathers and settled down, as though for a stay.

Bud scowled. Magpies do not ordinarily perch on the top of an occupied cabin, because the magpie is born with a fear of man—especially men who carry guns. Bud rode out of the brush and the magpies streaked for the trees, cackling loudly with fear. Bud dismounted at the door and went inside through the open door.

The cabin was empty. The old stove had been upset and the box cupboard had been wrenched from the wall. Blankets were strewn on the floor as if they had been dragged from the bunk, and left where they fell. On the floor near the bunk was the barrel and breech of a rifle, with the butt missing. It had been broken off.

Bud looked foolishly around the room, and backed to the door, as if afraid some one or something might materialize out of thin air and confront him in that dim, disordered cabin.

He even backed away from the open door and went to his horse, his mind in a turmoil. What had become of Whitey? Who had demolished things inside the cabin? Where was the dead Indian? Bud shut his teeth hard and tried to think calmly. Who would do this, and why?

His thoughts only ran in circles. He lifted his head and looked up at the Devil's Pulpit, where the eagle circled high above the top. Whitey knew where that money was—and Whitey was gone. Bud spurred his horse straight through the brush, regardless of thorn or tangle, and climbed to the edge of the slide-rock, where he dismounted and scrambled on afoot.

He had lost all sense of caution now, as he panted over the loose, flat rocks, which slipped and tilted under the soles of his high-heeled boots. The perspiration beaded his forehead and ran into his eyes, but he clawed his way up to the apex of the Pulpit like a hunted animal going to its den.

He flung himself flat against the rock, sank to his knees and clawed inside the opening, where he had hidden the sack of money. It was not there.

He shut his eyes and remained for a while, with his hand still within the empty cavity in the rock. He slowly drew out his hand, turned his body and slid to a sitting position, facing the coulée. For several minutes he was as motionless as a figure of stone, his eyes staring straight ahead, like the eyes of the blind, which are open, but see not.

HIS hand came up and slowly wiped the perspiration from his brow as he reacted from the succession of shocks. Then Bud Deal cursed; cursed with a withering flow of bitter profanity, directed at the unknown who had done all this. His soul seemed to open and vomit curses, as a machine-gun vomits bullets. It was not the slow bitter curses of defeat, but the snappy, biting words, which seemed fairly to sear his lips. Bud's soul was at white-heat, and it showed in his

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half-closed eyes, which seemed to flash, like tiny points of light.

He heaved himself to his feet and went stumbling and sliding back down the hill to his horse, where he mounted. As he turned his horse to ride toward the head of the coulée he saw a man ride into an opening in the bottom of the coulée. It was Garvin, but Bud was unable to tell just who it was. The man stopped and seemed to be watching down the coulée. He did not see Bud up there in the shadow from the Pulpit.

Bud slowly drew his Winchester from the scabbard under his leg. It was about four hundred yards to the man and horse, and Bud deliberately screwed up the sight for that elevation. Bud's sorrel turned its head to one side, as it felt its rider lift the gun.

The sorrel was too well gun-broke to let its rider fire past its ears. Bud drew down slowly until the ivory bead centered on the rider, and pressed the trigger. The heavy report seemed to echo from the Pulpit, like the double report of two shots, and rattled off through the cañon like a clap of thunder.

The horse dropped forward, as if its forelegs had been cut from under it, and the rider pitched forward over its head. Bud realized that he had shot low, dropping the horse. The rider scrambled to his feet and sprang for the cover of brush, while Bud shot again and again, until the magazine of his rifle was empty. He knew that he was missing—that he was shooting wildly.

He crammed shells into the loading-gate of his gun, whirled his sorrel and rode through the brush, cutting down the hill to reach the bottom below the cabin. He was not going to let that man get away alive if he could help it.

PAT and Jimmy had not seen Bud until he fired the first shot. The cabin was well screened from them; so they had not seen him ride down there. His first shot had caused them to look across at the Pulpit, where they could see him through an opening in the brush. Pat started to her feet to try to see who he was shooting at; but Jimmy drew her down again.

"Don't let any one see you," he cautioned. "Never mind who he's shootin' at. From the shells he's wastin', I've an idea he ain't doin' so well as might be wished for."

"But what is it all about, Jimmy?" Pat's eyes were wide with the wonder of it all. "Who is Bud Deal shooting at?"

"I've no idea at all, Pat, unless it might be Mister Garvin, who imitates a pack-rat by hidin' stuff."

"But why should Bud Deal shoot at him, Jimmy?"

Jimmy looked at Pat and she turned her head nervously, peering down into the coulée.

"Are ye afraid for Bud Deal?" asked Jimmy softly.

She looked at him curiously.

"Afraid for him?"

"Aye."

"Why, Jimmy."

"He—he might get hurt, ye know."

She bit her lip and looked back into the coulée, while Jimmy watched her closely. Then she turned and looked straight into his eyes, as if trying to read his thoughts.

"Jimmy, why is Bud Deal over here when he started for Squaw Creek?"

Jimmy grinned.

"Mebbe he lost his way."

"Don't joke with me. Why did you take that gun from under that lumber-pile, where I hid it, and change the handles? What do you know about that robbery?"

"I—I needed a gun," stammered Jimmy, "and—and I hate them darned slick pearl-handles."

"All right," said Pat evenly. "Now, what do you know about that robbery?"

"Quite a lot."

"How do you know quite a lot?"

"Because I was there," grinned Jimmy.

"You?"

Pat leaned forward, wide-eyed.

"You were there?"

"Under the car," nodded Jimmy. "I saw the men who did the job; but they was masked. I'll tell ye why I changed them handles, Pat."

Jimmy reached in his hip-pocket and brought out the two pearl-handles. From his watch-pocket he took out a small, triangular piece of pearl and fitted it into the broken corner of one of the pieces of pearl.

"I seen one of 'em drop his gun," explained Jimmy. "When they left I got off the train, and I found this piece of pearl. I think the butt of the gun hit a rock when it fell. I dunno why I picked it up."

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Pat looked dumbly at the piece of pearl and turned away, gazing across the coulée.

"It was my dad's gun," softly. "I—I don't know what to think."

"Aye, but he wasn't carryin' it, Pat."

"It was in his holster, hanging on the bedpost, when Garvin came for it that day."

"Sure it was; but the shells in that belt are all .41's. Would he be packin' a .45 gun and .41 shells?"

"Jimmy, you say you saw these men? Was one of them a big man—bigger than Garvin?"

"He was not."

"Oh, Jimmy, can you swear to this?"

"Aye," sadly. "But my oath wouldn't be much good, Pat. The court would not accept my testimony."

"Why not?"

Jimmy shook his head slowly.

"Don't ask me that. I'll tell ye soon, I'm thinkin'—but not now."

THEY both turned back to watching the coulée. There was no sign of Deal or Garvin. A gust of wind seemed to set the whole coulée into action, as it rippled the trees. Jimmy glanced up at the sky. Behind the Thunder Range great clouds were rolling into view, which would soon blot out the sun.

"We're in for a wettin'," declared Jimmy, pointing at the thunder-heads. "She's goin' to pop things wide open in a short time, I'm thinkin'."

"We are neither sugar nor salt," smiled Pat, "and a little water will not hurt us."

Another gust of wind whirled down the coulée. The big eagle, which had been sailing serenely around the Pulpit, suddenly tacked straight into the wind, dropping lower and lower, until it blended with the rocky butte.

Jimmy had been watching it. Suddenly he leaned forward and looked closer. About fifty feet from the summit a figure came into view—the figure of a man. Jimmy called Pat's attention.

"That is the crazy Indian!" she exclaimed. "Look at him! He's going through the same actions as he was when we first saw him."

It was true. He seemed to have moved forward a trifle, standing on a ledge of rock, with arms outstretched, head thrown back, as if invoking the storm. He was only a tiny figure, far away on the side of that seemingly sheer cliff; but the clear atmosphere etched every line of him clearly.

"What in the divil is he standin' on?" queried Jimmy. "And how did the poor old war-whoop get up there?"

For a full minute or more the Indian held the pose, while Pat and Jimmy scanned the place to see how he got up there. Then the Indian seemed to back into the cliff and disappear.

"Sure, he's got a cave up there," grunted Jimmy. "Did ye notice that his body kinda went down when he backed up? The shelf of rock is tilted, which masks the entrance to the cave."

"But how does he get up there?" queried Pat.

"There's a way, and it's likely easy," grinned Jimmy, "only nobody knows it, except the Injun. Do ye know much of him, Pat?"

She shook her head. "Not much. He has been around here a long time. They say he was a powerful man before whisky ruined his muscles. They say that old Jim never broke his word to any one. Dad always said that Jim was just as honest as a dollar."

"He was takin' care of my sick friend," said Jimmy.

"Old Jim? Taking care—why, he's insane!"

"Aye. The poor feller is in a little cabin down there in the brush. We better hunt a shelter, Pat."

The sun had already been blotted out and a low rumble of thunder seemed to vibrate the earth. Forked streaks of lightning split the black mass of storm clouds, which were sweeping swiftly toward them.

"We'll go down to the little cabin, Pat," said Jimmy. "It ain't much, but mebbe it will stop a bit o' the downpour."

They hurried to their horses and untied them. Whistler was terrified at the storm, which was already flattening the brush around them.

Jimmy managed to mount, after he had helped Pat into her saddle; but both horses flatly refused to face the storm, which was already into them. Lightning seemed to play all around them, and the thunder was like the jarring of mighty guns.

Jimmy pulled his hat low over his eyes and spurred the roan to the edge of the coulée. Pat's horse followed closely, almost crowding the roan off its feet. The side of

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the coulée was steep and covered with rocks and brush, with an occasional tree.

Straight down the hill, twisting and turning, went the two horses. Around them wind howled, though as yet there had been no rain. Up near the foot of the Pulpit a tall, dead tree snapped off like a match and fell far down across the slide-rock.

Jimmy and Pat fought their way down the hill and reached the bottom some distance below the cabin, just as the first gust of rain struck them. It stung like hail and the horses swung around, with their heads away from it. Another gust of stinging rain and then the downpour.

The world seemed blotted out in the whirl of the elements. Jimmy crowded the roan in beside Pat and quickly knotted a rope around her horse's neck. He tried to tell her that he was doing that to keep them from being separated, but the wind snatched the words from his mouth and he could not even hear his own shouting.

Came a blinding flash of white light, which lighted the world as bright as sunlight, and then a terrific crash, which fairly staggered the horses. For a few moments the world seemed stilled. It was as if a giant cannon had been fired and the gunners were watching for the effects of the projectile. Then there came a dull roar, like the starting of a giant engine.

Jimmy turned his head and tried to see what it meant. It sounded like water now—the roar of a waterfall. He could hear the splash of it. Then it broke out of the storm pall—a rushing river, white-crested in the dim light.

"A cloudburst!" yelled Jimmy, spurring into Pat's horse and swinging the animal toward the side of the hill. "Ride like the divil, Pat."

But the water was into them before they could get into action—at least eight feet of it, compressed within the walls of that coulée and running like a mill-race. Brush and trees seemed to rise out of it and fall splashing, like some water animal playing. The horses and riders were swept along with it. Jimmy swung in close to Pat to steady her in the saddle. The only thing to do was to try and ride it out or to fight it until the peak of the flood was past.

There was little left of the storm, which had done its damage and hurried on. The lightning was almost as bright as before, but the thunder showed that the main part of the storm was moving away fast. The water and sky were almost black, and the floating débris made it difficult for a horse to swim safely.

A bunch of connected logs almost drove into them, and Jimmy knew it was part of the little cabin. Whitey must be drowned.

"Anyway," he reflected, "he had to go soon—and time meant little to him."

"Jimmy!" cried Pat, leaning closer to him. "We've got to get out of this! This cañon breaks off into a deep gorge down here, and if we go over that——"

The wind swept away the rest, but Jimmy knew what she meant. It was a bit lighter now and he could see that they were a little to the right of the center of the flood, but there was quite a distance between them and the higher ground of the side.

He managed to turn both horses almost around and start a fight to get within reach of the bank. They could already hear the heavy roar of water falling a long way and Jimmy knew they were but a short distance above where the coulée dropped off into the deep gorge, which was probably a tributary to Bitter River.

The horses were almost exhausted from their swim and were making little headway toward the bank. Jimmy managed to take the lariat rope off Pat's saddle. He had snubbed the lead-rope of Pat's horse to his saddle-horn; and now he quickly knotted the end of the lariat around his own horse's neck, leaving the loop and the rest of the rope free.

Inch by inch they fought almost against the swiftly running flood, working a trifle closer to the bank all the time. The world seemed filled with roar of falling water. Pat's wet face showed ashen, but her jaw was set and she never looked back. Jimmy looked at the bank and back at Pat.

"When I swing around, hammer the hide off your horse!" he yelled.

He whirled the Whistler toward the bank, but the current sent them drifting again.

"Swim, ye outlaw divil!" yelped Jimmy, drawing himself up on the saddle, where he knelt, rope in hand.

Fifty feet—forty feet—thirty! They were beginning to swing out again.

"Hold fast!" yelled Jimmy.

He threw out the coils of rope, slipped the loop around his arm and sprang as far as possible toward the shore.

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He went out of sight, but came up, fighting his way. His feet touched bottom and he surged forward, half-choked. Out to waist-deep he went before the horses took up the slack on the rope.

The shock threw him into the water, but he came up in shallower water, braced taut against the rope. He could see that both horses had whirled and were trying to face the water again. Foot by foot he fought his way to the shore, straining every muscle. The looped rope cut his muscles until his left arm seemed lifeless.

With a last despairing burst of power he ran knee-deep in water, slackening the pull on the rope, but gaining the shore, where he flung himself around a small tree, snubbing the rope tight.

Slowly the two horses drifted into the shore, swinging on the rope until their feet touched bottom. For a few moments they shook and panted from their efforts.

Jimmy managed to release his numbed arm and tried to stand up; but the effort was too much, and he sat down beside the tree. Pat spurred the horses up to him, leading the Whistler.

He looked up at her wearily and smiled foolishly.

"Little Pat, are ye all right?"

"All except one thing, Jimmy."

"What's that?"

"The eggs are all smashed."

"Oh!" Jimmy looked back across the water and wiped his face with the back of his hand. "Well, it's just as well they are, Pat. Sure, the poor divil won't have any use for eggs now, I'm thinkin'."

The roar of the falls seemed louder now and they looked at each other, knowing what it would have meant.

"You saved my life, Jimmy," said Pat simply.

"Mine, too," grinned Jimmy. "I think we better go home and get some dry clothes."

He unfastened the ropes, climbed stiffly into his saddle and they rode up the side of the coulée. The sun broke out suddenly and the world sparkled again. Up above the Devil's Pulpit the big eagle was soaring again, and a mist seemed to float out of the depths. They reached the top of the hill and stopped to rest their horses. Jimmy looked at Pat and a smile spread over his homely face.

"Ye look like a drowned kitten, and I suppose I look beautiful meself. There was one unfortunate thing about it, Pat."

"What was that, Jimmy?"

"It isn't Saturday night—bad luck to it."

GARVIN hadn't the slightest idea who had fired the shot that killed his horse, but he knew where the shots had been fired from. After he had ducked into the brush he got a glimpse of a mounted man riding into the brush near the foot of the Pulpit.

He could see that the rider was cutting down the hill, evidently with the intention of intercepting him, in case he went on down toward the cabin. Garvin was no such fool. He knew that the other man had a rifle, and had the odds in his favor.

Garvin crossed back across the coulée, keeping in the deep cover, and climbed up through the brush toward where the man had done the shooting. It was slow, difficult going, as he wanted to keep concealed. He could see the big storm coming and he thought he might stop in the shelter of the Pulpit until it was over.

But when he had reached a point just beyond where Bud had turned from firing the shots, he saw the horse and rider about two hundred yards below him. Bud had dismounted and was working his way farther toward the cabin, but staying up on the side of the hill. He was getting into a position, where he could command the clearing, around the cabin. He had not tied his horse, but had dropped the reins; which constituted a tether to a range-broken horse.

Garvin chuckled to himself. By working carefully he could sneak down on this man. The noise of the storm would cover his approach. A flash of lightning and a sudden snap of thunder caused Bud's sorrel to whirl away, ignoring its training. Another crash, and the frightened horse came running up the hill, straight for Garvin. A whirl of rain blotted out the horse for a moment, but Garvin could see it was coming straight to him. Brush and rocks impeded its progress, but Garvin would never have been able to stop it, except for the fact that one of its fore-legs tangled in the reins, almost throwing the animal.

Garvin clutched it by the headstall and succeeded in whirling it around. Rain and wind tore into them and the horse reared

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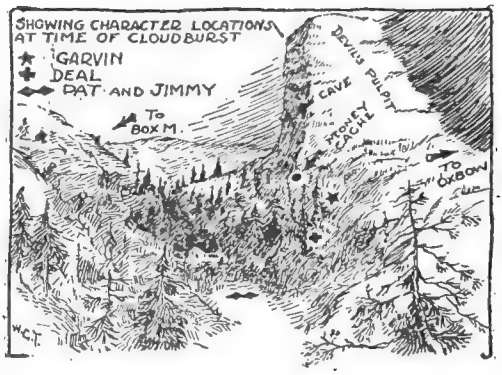
and snorted, but Garvin managed to get into the saddle and ride into the shelter of the Pulpit.

A few moments later came the cloud-burst. The Pulpit seemed to shake to its very foundations, and small rocks rained off the ledges like hail. Garvin spurred out into the open, braving the storm rather than falling rock, and headed for Oxbow.



He knew this horse belonged to Bud Deal, and that Bud would, in all probability, have to walk back to the Box M; but he needed the horse as badly as Bud did. He felt sure that Bud suspected that he, Garvin, had lifted the cache. He also felt sure that Bud would never dare accuse him openly.

Flint and Wild Moore would get a hearing tomorrow and Garvin did not care which way it went. He hated them both, but his suddenly acquired wealth softened this a trifle. He would serve out his term and quietly disappear. He could dispose of his holdings easily, which would alibi him for having money. Taking it all the way around, Jeff Garvin was very well satisfied with his day's work.

Bud Deal had not missed his horse until he realized that the storm was out of the ordinary, and went back to get the animal. Rain was blotting out the landscape and he could see only a short distance. Luckily for him he climbed higher, thinking perhaps the horse had gone up the hill, and when the cloud-burst came he was just above the rushing torrent.

He climbed still higher, fighting against the storm, until he reached the crest of the hill to the right of the Pulpit. He knew that nothing could live in that mad rush of water, and he laughed aloud to think that the man who had lifted the cache was probably down there. He had shot this man's horse and had every reason to believe that this man was still down in the bottom of the coulée. He hadn't the least idea where Whitey had gone. If Whitey was still in the coulée he would be drowned.

Whitey was physically unable to take the money and make a getaway. Bud felt sure that the old Indian was dead, which removed him from any part in the deal. Devlin had not had time to take the money and get away with it. Frawley didn't, because he was in Oxbow. There remained one possibility—Garvin.

Garvin had done this! Bud clenched his teeth. He had divulged too much to Garvin. Had Garvin found the body of the old Indian and was holding it as a club over him? Bud waited for the storm to break, but could see nothing of his horse.

It made things bad for him, because he would have to walk back to the ranch and lie about the losing of the horse. He looked back toward the coulée and scanned the dripping hills.

"That —— sorrel must 'a' got caught in the flood!" he exclaimed aloud. "I'll have to invent a cloud-burst in the Squaw Creek country, where I lost my horse and saddle. Then I'll sneak in here later on, find the wreck of my saddle and plant the —— thing. If I only knew where Pat and that danged boomer were I'd feel a heap easier in my mind."

It might not be so hard to hoodwink the folks at the Box M, after all. If that was Garvin down there in the coulée, there was a good chance that he was dead now; but if he wasn't— Bud shook his head slowly and stared into space from under his dripping hat-brim. He was going to kill Garvin just as soon as possible.

X

PAT and Jimmy reached home several hours before Mrs. Moore and Jud Frawley came back from town, and found dry clothes. Pat supplied Jimmy with some of Wild's clothes, which fitted a trifle snug. The rest she dried out in a short time beside the bunk-house stove.

Garvin had appointed Pete Havez deputy, and Pete was in charge of the office and jail when Jud and Mrs. Moore arrived. Pete was a saturnine young man, who was ambitious to be known as a gunman.

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Pete had been kicked from cow-ranch to cow-ranch until he grew too big to stand for further kicking, and the balance of his education—his post-graduate course, as it were—consisted of learning how to make a hair-brand, mark playing-cards and draw a six-shooter.

Physically, Pete was not a marvel. His face was thin and dark, with close-set black eyes, a nose, which had been classically Roman until a 77 cowpuncher tested its resiliency with a neck-yoke, and a mouth full of very bad teeth. He was of medium height, slightly bowed in the legs and had a peculiar shamble in his walk.

Pete had met them at the office door. Jud Frawley had known Pete for years, and cared less for him every year. In fact, Jud had predicted that Pete would be hanged, as soon as his body got heavy enough to break his neck.

Jud made known their wants. Pete took them under advisement. He was not a rapid thinker and back in his small brain lurked the feeling that Garvin might not care to have Frawley talk to Flint Moore.

"Can't do it, Jud," he drawled slowly. "Nobody's goin' to talk to m' prisoners."

Pete gazed lovingly at his nickel-plated insignia of office, which was placed prominently on his vest. The next instant a strong hand grasped his collar, while another took up the slack of his overall-seat, and he fairly looped the loop, landing upside-down in a corner of the office. His gun flipped out of its holster and skated off across the floor.

"You got the keys to the jail, ain't yuh?" asked Jud in a conversational tone of voice.

Pete looked up at him and nodded dumbly. He got to his feet, tested himself for possible dislocations and let them into the jail.

Pat and Jimmy laughed at Jud's serious description of how Pete had acted during the interview. They had told of the missing gun, and both Flint and Wild declared that neither of them wore that .45 on that day. Wild wore a .44 and Flint a .41. Neither of them had any idea where that .41 was now, and they also realized that their oath that neither had the pearl-handled .45 on that day would not help them to any extent, in case the gun was found and identified.

They found out that the hearing was to be held the next day, and unless Garvin already had the gun, there would be no evidence to hold them any longer.

Jimmy had cautioned Pat to make no mention of what they had seen that day. Jimmy felt sure that Whitey was dead, and with him went all hopes of establishing his innocence of the crime for which he had served time in the penitentiary. Jimmy had intended getting a written confession from Whitey, if possible. Now, there was no one in the world to help him prove his innocence.

It was supper-time when Bud Deal arrived. He had circled the ranch to come in from the direction of Squaw Creek. Frawley and Jimmy were sitting on the ranch-house porch, when Bud showed up, limping from blistered heels, a figure of dejection.

"What happened to you?" asked Frawley.

Bud sat down on the porch and eased his aching feet.

"Cloud-burst. Caught me in one of them narrow Squaw Creek cañons and drowned my sorrel. Dang near drowned me, too. Had to walk all the way home."

"Ain't you been on the range long enough to keep out of cañons when a storm is comin'?" asked Frawley.

"Aw, ——!" snorted Bud, getting to his feet. "How'd I know it was goin' to bust so quick? Think I went down there to try and drown myself?"

Frawley continued to draw on his pipe, indifferently to Bud's outburst. Pat came to the door to call the men to supper. Bud stared at her, but she turned and went back into the house. Jimmy was paying no attention to Bud, who noticed that Jimmy was wearing a faded plaid flannel shirt, which had belonged to Wild. It fit tight over Jimmy's muscular body and threatened to burst across the shoulders as Jimmy folded his arms and looked up at Bud.

"Where did ye say that cloud-burst was?"

Bud looked at Jimmy closely. What did this range-boomer know about the cloud-burst? Was he trying to catch him in a lie?

"Squaw Creek," replied Bud and limped down toward the bunk-house.

Jimmy and Frawley watched him go inside and close the door.

"Where did you and Pat go today?" asked Frawley.

Jimmy grinned slowly.

"Would ye mind if I didn't tell ye—now, Mister Frawley?"

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Frawley squinted at Jimmy for a moment and put his hand on Jimmy's knee.

"Smith, I reckon yore a square-shooter. Yuh ain't got the face of a mean *hombre*," Frawley jerked his head toward the door and leaned closer. "I been watchin' you and little Pat, and I *sabe* the fact that she cottons to yuh, Smith—which ain't yore name, no more than mine's Goldberg."

Frawley paused and seemed undecided just how to say what was on his mind.

"You ain't far enough removed from Ireland to get the name of Smith, but that ain't nothin' against yuh. I'm Irish, too. Names don't count. What I want to know is this: Can yuh come clean to little Pat? Does that borrowed name mean that yuh done somethin' yuh hadn't ought to 'a' done—somethin' that might hurt her?"

Jimmy was looking at Frawley, but now he turned and stared off across the hills. Frawley noticed that his face was tense, his muscles set—like a man watching a terrific struggle. For a full minute Jimmy did not move. Then his body relaxed and he turned to Frawley with a smile.

"Mister Frawley, I'll be goin' away tonight. Between me and you, I can say that I've done no wrong; but twelve men have said that I sinned against society. It's twelve to one, and I—I lose."

"Can't yuh prove nothin'?" softly.

"Not now. I'm glad ye spoke as ye did, Mister Frawley. I've said no word to Pat that a brother wouldn't have spoken to her. Me name is not Smith—it's Devlin."

Frawley slowly took his pipe from between his lips.

"Devlin? The train-robber?"

"Devlin," said Jimmy slowly, "the man they say robbed a train."

For a while neither man spoke. Frawley got to his feet, as Pat came to the door again.

"How many times do I have to call you to supper?" she demanded. "Have you lost your appetites?"

Jimmy got to his feet as Pat turned back inside. Frawley held out his hand to him.

"Devlin, I don't believe them twelve men had the right dope. I'm pleased to meetcha."

They shook hands solemnly and went into the house.

BUD did not come to supper until the rest were almost finished. He tried to make light of the loss of his horse and saddle. He would go back there in a day or two and try to recover his saddle.

He described in detail the cloud-burst and his fight for life, while Pat watched his face closely. She knew that Bud lied about where the flood had happened, but she did not know he had not been in the water. Jimmy was silent through the meal and excused himself before the rest were finished. Frawley and Mrs. Moore left the room and Bud and Pat were together.

"Were you ridin' with that range-boomer today?" asked Bud.

Pat looked up quickly.

"What makes you think so?"

"Your horse and the Whistler look it," grunted Bud just a trifle sarcastically.

"Well, suppose we were?" challenged Pat.

Bud leaned across the table and lowered his voice.

"Yuh ought to find out a few things about a feller before yuh go ridin' in the hills with him."

"Yes?" Pat's tawny eyes were half-closed as she looked straight at Bud. "Suppose you tell me about him."

"Yuh think I can't?" Bud fingered his mustache nervously. "Mebbe you'd like to know his name ain't Smith? How would yuh like to know that you've been ridin' the hills with a paroled thief?"

Pat sprang to her feet and leaned across the table.

"I think you lie, Bud Deal!"

Bud laughed mockingly and shook his head.

"No, I don't lie. That's what we fought over. I found him out; *sabe?*"

Pat knew that Bud was telling the truth; but she did not want to believe it.

"His right name is Jim Devlin," said Bud gloatingly, as he got up from the table. "Ask him if it ain't."

Pat had heard of Devlin. She turned slowly and went to her room, passing Frawley, who had come to the door. Bud looked up at him. Frawley had heard Bud expose Jimmy, and his blood boiled. He knew that Bud had deliberately tried to hurt Pat, and that he had succeeded very well.

For a few moments the two men looked

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at each other. Neither spoke as Bud walked past Frawley and went outside. Frawley crossed the living room to Pat's door, which was open. Pat was standing beside her dresser, staring at the wall, but she turned as Frawley came up.

"You heard what Bud said?" asked Pat.

"Uh-huh," nodded Frawley. "Devlin told me who he was. Bein' innocent and bein' able to prove it is two different things. He's goin' away tonight."

"Going away?" whispered Pat. "Tonight?"

"Uh-huh. I been thinkin'—kinda. He broke that Whistler horse to ride. When yuh come right down to it, that horse don't belong to anybody. My saddle's gettin' kinda old, and I need a new one—kinda."

Frawley scratched his chin.

"Hate to see a feller walkin'—kinda."

"Jud Frawley," said Pat softly, her eyes filling, "when God made you he broke the mold. Do just as you please. I need a new saddle-blanket and a bridle—kinda."

Frawley half-smiled at her imitation of him and patted her on the shoulder.

"Keep grinnin', little Pat. Mebbe she'll all come out in the wash."

Jimmy was leaning on the corral fence, with Klooch and the puppy beside him, as Frawley came out of the house. The Whistler, which had moved in close and was nuzzling at Jimmy, snorted at the approach of Frawley and walked away.

"Pat knows," said Frawley. "Bud told her who you are."

"That's kind of him," said Jimmy shortly.

"She said to give yuh that Whistler horse. There's a saddle, a blanket and a bridle yuh can have, Devlin."

Jimmy looked quickly at Frawley.

"What's the idea?"

Frawley lit his pipe and puffed violently for a moment.

"I think she expects yuh to come back—kinda. And she don't want to have yuh walk and get yore feet sore."

"I hope she's right," Jimmy smiled sadly and patted Klooch. "It don't look very good right now, but ye never can tell. Anyway I've a memory of two fine women and one square-shootin' man. I'll be goin' now, I think."

"Better wait until mornin'."

"Why prolong it? Deal knows who I am, and if I stay I may not forgive him for the tellin' of it to—her."

"Won't yuh go and tell Pat good-by?"

"I'm thinkin' it's better this way, Mister Frawley. I'll wait and say hello, instead."

XI

WHITEY ALLEN painfully raised his head and looked at the figure huddled at a tiny fire just beyond the mouth of the short cave. Beyond he could see that twinkle of stars. He sank back and gazed up at the rock roof, as he tried to connect up the events of the day. He knew he was in a cave, but he had no idea where that cave was located.

He remembered that old Indian Jim had returned to the cabin, coming in softly, like a hunting animal. Whitey was powerless for a minute. He felt that Bud had killed the old Indian, but after the shock of seeing him had passed he realized that the bullet had only shocked.

Old Jim was a horrible object. The bullet had struck him almost between the eyes and had plowed its way around the side of his skull. The Indian's face and upper body was clotted with blood, his clothes nearly all gone. Whitey spoke to him, but the Indian did not hear him. His eyes were wild and he mouthed a language which Whitey had never heard.

He appeared to be hunting for some one. He would go to the door, look out, and come back, searching the room. Suddenly he saw Whitey and pounced upon him like a wild beast. Whitey was weak, but fought desperately to break the clutch of the Indian. They crashed into the wall, knocking down the cupboard and falling into the stove. Whitey remembered little after this.

The Indian had taken him to a cave—but for what? Whitey realized that his wound had broken open again and that he was much weaker than before his fight in the cabin. He called to the Indian, who did not lift his head. Whitey crawled painfully to the mouth of the cave and tried to get to his feet.

"*Kopel!*" hissed the Indian. Whitey knew that kopet meant "stop!"

"What's the matter with yuh, Jim?" asked Whitey.

"*Mesika* sick—*Nika kloshe nanitsh.*"

"I'm sick, eh?" muttered Whitey. "You take care of me?"

"*Kloshel*" grunted the old Indian.

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Whitey studied the silent figure for a while. He felt sure that old Jim was crazy from the shock of the bullet. He had known old Jim slightly, but Bud had known him for years. Bud had told him that old Jim never broke his word. Bud had told old Jim to take care of Whitey—told him to stay with him all the time.

Now, the old fellow had been knocked silly from the pistol-shot, and the only remaining instinct in his brain was to guard Whitey. This did not please Whitey, who had no desire to live in a cave with a crazy aborigine. He was too weak to stand, so he tried to crawl out and see where he was.

Old Jim pounced upon him like a flash and dragged him back into the cave.

"*Kopell*" hissed the old buck.

Whitey was willing to stop. Old Jim was far from gentle in his handling. He went back to hump over his fire, while Whitey sprawled on the floor of the cave and watched the tiny flicker of the fire on the rocky points of the cave roof.

Whitey had gotten to a point where he hardly cared what happened to him. Many things he had forgotten. It took him some time to remember where that money had been hid, and he wondered if it was still there. Somehow, he did not care so much. He was glad that Bud, instead of himself, had killed the fireman. Whitey did not want to die a murderer.

While Whitey dozed and the Old Indian sat humped up over his tiny fire, Jimmy Devlin came across the hills toward the Devil's Pulpit. It was his intention to cut across into Silverbend County, probably to Cottonwood.

He followed the route taken by Pat and himself and came out to the edge of the coulée almost at the place where they had remained concealed. For a long time he sat on his horse, living over the events of the day. Just a short distance to his left was the hiding-place of enough money to enable him to live comfortably, but he did not want it.

He knew that Pat would see that it was returned to its rightful owners. The Devil's Pulpit loomed blackly against the stars. Suddenly there came a tiny gleam of light against the side of the cliff, like the light of a candle. Several times it flared up, only to die down again, leaving the side of the cliff a wall of darkness.

"It's that old Injun's light," muttered Jimmy aloud. "I wonder what he's doin' up there."

Whistler moved uneasily, trying to look back. Jimmy turned in his saddle. Between him and the brush a pair of eyes seemed to glow like yellow fire. Jimmy stared at them for quite a while, but they did not move.

"Klooch!" breathed Jimmy softly, and the shape of the wolf-dog trotted out of the dark and up beside the horse, where it stood and peered across the coulée.

"Klooch, why did ye come?" asked Jimmy. "Will I have to take ye back, I wonder?"

He dismounted and sat down on a rock beside Klooch, running his hand through her ruff and over her muzzle.

"I'm thinkin' I'll keep ye, Klooch. They've no use for you back there. We'll be a fine three, I'm thinkin'. A wild horse, a wolf-dog and a paroled thief."

Klooch pulled away from him and looked at the Pulpit, where the light sparkled again. She growled deep in her throat and lay down beside him.

"Ye don't like it, eh?" grunted Jimmy. "Well, we'll wait for mornin' and see about it. None of us three are in any hurry, 'cause we ain't goin' no place."

He loosened the saddle-cinch, tied the Whistler to a scrub snag and sat down to wait for daylight.

At intervals the light flared, as old Jim placed fresh fuel on the flames. When the first hint of dawn came he looked at Whitey, sprawled on the rocks, and slipped silently away.

Whitey had been waiting his chance and as soon as the Indian disappeared he crept to the ledge. He realized that he was over half-way up the Pulpit. Apparently the rock broke sheer below him, and there was no way of going up to the top of the Pulpit. Beyond him, to the left, was a narrow ledge.

He crawled out on this and peered down. Suddenly the old Indian appeared at the foot of the cliff and shambled away into the brush. Whitey crawled around this ledge and in behind a spire of rock, where he found another cavelike place—a sort of chimney, angling downward. It was a place of easy descent for a normal person, but Whitey was far from normal. Every move was torture.

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There was a strong possibility that he would fall and perhaps kill himself; but he reasoned that even that was better than being cooped up in a cave with a crazy Indian. He slid his legs over the opening and started down.

It seemed hours until he came to the lower opening, where he came out into daylight. A series of ledges, like giant steps, seemed to lead down a wide crevice, masked with brush and scrubs. Utterly exhausted, he dragged himself over the slide-rock and into the brush just before the old Indian came through the small opening and back up the route to the cave.

Whitey saw old Jim disappear into the crevice, and he knew it would only be a short time until he would be hunted. Whitey's one idea was to escape the Indian, but he also wanted to take that money—or at least his half of it.

Dragging himself as a wounded animal might, he got to the point of the rock, where Bud had told him the money had been cached. The place was there, as described, but the money was gone. Whitey turned, his back to the rock, and huddled down while the insane Indian, like a hunting-dog, followed him unerringly.

Whitey made no effort to escape. He was half-conscious when the Indian picked him up, as a man might pick up a child, and started back to the cave with him.

JIMMY had seen the Indian leave the cave and go the length of the narrow ledge, where he disappeared. Later he had seen him appear at the foot of the cliff and go into the brush. He had not seen Whitey, because Whitey had crawled instead of walking.

Jimmy was curious to know why the Indian was living up there and keeping a fire burning through the night. He rode down the hill and into the coulée with Klooch leading the way. The cloud-burst had swept the coulée clean of down-timber, and not a stick was left of the little cabin. The brush was flattened and mud-filled, which made it look like the bed of a river.

Jimmy rode to the edge of the slide-rock and tied the Whistler to a tree. He climbed up to the clearing where he had seen the Indian. Klooch cast about with her nose to the rocks and growled deep in her throat. The Indian scent was strong, and Klooch hated Indians. Straight to the foot of the broken ledges led the wolf-dog, with Jimmy sliding and slipping behind her.

Klooch stopped only long enough to see Jimmy was coming and started on up the rock. Where an ordinary dog would have balked, Klooch sprang and clawed her way up. She stopped at the mouth of the chimney and sniffed inside, hackles erect. Jimmy panted up to her and they both investigated the thing.

"Sure, we've got to play Santa Claus," grinned Jimmy. "Can ye climb a stove-pipe, Klooch?"

Jimmy made a move to go inside, but Klooch sprang in ahead and began clawing her way upward. Jimmy helped her at times, but she needed little help. Twisting and turning they came to the opening behind the spire and beheld the ledge, which extended around the corner. An odor of fire and roasting meat came to their nostrils.

Jimmy tried to make Klooch follow him, but she moved out ahead, where he could not pass her.

"Then take it easy," whispered Jimmy. "Go slow."

Klooch seemed to sense the need of caution, for she crept lower along the ledge, ears back as if ready for a rush.

"You're a he-man's dog, so ye are," reflected Jimmy, loosening the gun in his holster. "I'd rather be backed by the likes of you than by many men I know."

Straight ahead they went, slowly. Klooch fairly crawled on her belly now, and Jimmy hugged the narrow ledge. He could look straight down into the big coulée and it seemed a mile down to the tips of the trees. The circling eagle cast a shadow across the ledge, and Jimmy glanced up at it, high above him.

Suddenly the ledge widened a trifle and Jimmy turned his back from the wall. Just in front of him was the wider part of the ledge in front of the cave, and standing almost within reach of him was the insane Indian.

He was looking at Jimmy, and apparently oblivious of the wolf-dog between them. He had a heavy hunting-knife in his hand, with which he had been cutting up a rabbit, which was sizzling on the small fire.

There was little about the old Indian to make any one believe he was even part human, except his shape. His face seemed entirely animal, and had not been washed

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since Bud had shot him. The upper part of his body was nude and was streaked with dried blood and yellow dirt from the muddy coulée. His hair seemed to stick out like a roach, except where it was plastered tight to his head.

Only for a moment did he stare at Jimmy, and then, with a grunt, like an enraged animal, he sprang toward him. As the Indian leaped Klooch shot straight into him, fangs bared and without a sound. They seemed to meet in mid-air and lock together. Into them came Jimmy with a rush, grasping the Indian's knife-hand in time to save the dog, and the three of them went down in a heap, almost off the edge.

The Indian's head struck the rock and fairly rebounded; but it took all of Jimmy's strength to hold him down, even after he was knocked half-unconscious. Jimmy managed to turn him over on his face and to tie his hands with the short rope that the Indian used in place of a belt.

Klooch watched the operation closely and only moved back when the Indian was rolled over on his back, helpless. Jimmy stood up and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Klooch was moving into the cave, growling deep in her throat, and Jimmy followed her in to where Whitey lay on his back, looking blankly up at him.

"Whitey!" exclaimed Jimmy wonderingly. "Whitey, I thought ye was dead!"

Whitey's eyes told him that he was not dead, but his lips barely moved and an unintelligible mumble came from his throat. Jimmy picked him up and carried him to the ledge, where he laid him down near the old Indian.

Whitey revived enough to turn his head and look at the Indian, and a sigh of relief came when he could see that the old man was a captive. Jimmy sat down and rolled a smoke, which he lighted and gave to Whitey, who thanked him with his eyes as he puffed slowly.

The Indian glared at Jimmy like a trapped animal as he strained at his bonds. Klooch watched the Indian closely, ready to throttle him if he attempted to get up. Whitey shifted to an easier position and looked at Jimmy.

"How did yuh find me?" he whispered weakly.

"Trailin' the Injun," smiled Jimmy.

"Oh, that —— Injun!" Whitey's voice seemed thin and querulous, as if he had suffered much. "Jimmy, he's as crazy as a loon. Picks me up and slams me all around. He carried me up here."

"How do ye feel, Whitey?"

"I'm all through, Jimmy. Blood poison, I think."

"Blood poison?" echoed Jimmy. "Did ye get cut?"

"Shot," whispered Whitey. "Shot in the lungs."

"The divil ye are! Well, now ye need a doctor, old-timer; but how am I to——"

Whitey shook his head.

"No, use, Jimmy. I'm numb all over and I wouldn't last that long. I want to see the sheriff, though."

Whitey's jaw set and he tried to shift his body, but the pain was too great.

"Jimmy, I've been double-crossed, and I want to save a man who was awful good to me. I'm afraid—I—can't—make—it—though."

"Whitey, I—I want ye to square me with the world, if ye can. It can't harm ye to let the world know that I did not hold up that train, and it will do me a lot of good."

"God knows I want to, Jimmy," whispered Whitey eagerly. "You're the squarest man I ever knowed. You gave me a chance, pardner—a chance that a saint would never have given me, and—and I lied to you. Jimmy, I lied!"

"Lied to me?"

"Yes. I wasn't dying from consumption, Jimmy. I lied to yuh, because I knowed you'd help me. You always helped others. I went to work for the Box M outfit, while you was in jail.

"I was afraid to touch that money I had hid under the floor of the old cabin. I heard that you had died in prison, and it almost drove me crazy thinkin' about it. I—I got drunk and bragged about finding money under the cabin floor."

Whitey's voice croaked to a stop and he shut his eyes. Jimmy thought for a moment that Whitey had passed on, but he recovered.

"Wild Moore got the money, Jimmy. He didn't know who it belonged to. He went to Cottonwood, where he made a killin' at roulette. I knew he got it, and I told him so. Wild was square about it, and gave me back the original money. It's cached under the bunk-house floor at the Box M."

Whitey's voice drifted to a weak whisper

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again. "Bud Deal and I stole the cattle that Wild was arrested for. We knew they couldn't cinch him. Bud Deal shot the Injun and cached the body, but I reckon the bullet was too soft or the old buck's head was too hard. Gawd, I wish he'd let me alone, Jimmy."

"Who double-crossed ye, Whitey?" asked Jimmy.

"Bud Deal. We—" Whitey seemed to be groping for words. "We robbed a train. I—I got shot—Bud—shot—fireman. I—I—Jimmy, Bud lifted the cache, —— —— his sneakin' soul! Have yuh got a pencil and paper, Jimmy? I—I can't live long and I—want—to—write—it—out."

Jimmy searched his pockets, but he knew it was useless. He had paper, but no pencil.

"Have ye no pencil, Whitey?"

Whitey shook his head weakly.

"No, Jimmy."

He seemed to slide lower in the rocks and his eyes closed wearily. Jimmy shook him, but there was no response. Klooch sniffed at him and turned away.

Jimmy sat down on his heels and considered his next move. Whitey was dying, and with his death would go all hope of clearing the Devlin name. He realized that he could not carry Whitey around that cliff and down to the horse. The old Indian had twisted on his side and was staring at Jimmy, with flat, lack-luster eyes.

"What you talk?" asked Jimmy. "*Sabe* English?"

The Indian did not even blink. Jimmy was not familiar with the different Indian tongues, but he did know a little of Chinook, the trade-language.

"*Kumtuks Chinook?*" he asked.

The Indian blinked and hissed—

"*Kwish!*"

'Ah-ha!" grunted Jimmy. "*Kwish*, eh? If I ain't mistaken, that means ye refuse to have anythin' to do with me. Now, me high-toned laddie-buck, I'm bossin' this perch, and if ye don't do me biddin' ye'll be shakin' hands with some of your happy-huntin' ancestors."

Jimmy stepped over, picked up the Indian's knife and cut his bonds. The Indian sat up and flexed his arms, while Jimmy leaned against the rock wall, his .45 set at his hip. He was taking no chances this time. The Indian got to his feet and looked around. Klooch crouched a few feet away, blocking the Indian from the exit.

"*Lolo!*" snapped Jimmy, pointing at the unconscious Whitey. The Indian stared at Jimmy and at Whitey.

"*Lolo*," he clucked. "*Lolo?*"

Jimmy nodded.

"That means 'to carry,' don't it? Well, go ahead and carry him down out of this."

"*Hyak lolo!*" snapped Jimmy impatiently.

Without a word the old Indian picked Whitey up in his arms, slung him across his shoulder and started along the ledge, with Klooch going ahead and Jimmy carefully bringing up the rear.

It was a strange procession around the narrow ledges and down the chimney. Klooch never failed to watch the Indian, who, even with his burden, was able to travel faster than Jimmy. The Indian blocked the light from below so completely that Jimmy was forced almost to feel his way down the chimney, and he had barely got into it before the Indian and Whitey disappeared out the bottom.

Jimmy knew that the Indian had the start of him, and he skinned knee and elbow in his rapid descent. He landed at the bottom in a shower of rubble and jumped out onto a ledge, where he could look down.

The Indian had reached the bottom of the cliff, with Whitey, and now he started to run for the brush, going straight toward Whistler, who was tied in plain sight.

But the Indian made a great mistake when he started running. If he had walked he might have reached the horse, but the minute he started running Klooch knew that something was wrong. She had been undecided what to do, but now she ran angling with the Indian, flashed between his legs and threw him spinning. Before he could get up she was on him, pinning him down, her fangs at his throat.

Whitey was almost flung into the brush and seemed to collapse, like a dummy figure, cast aside. Jimmy hurried down over the stone steps and went to Whitey. He was still alive. In the fall his forehead had come in contact with a sharp rock, which did not improve his condition to any great extent. He was still unconscious.

Jimmy went over to the Indian. Being thrown into the slide-rock had not helped him physically but the sullen glare seemed

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to have left his eyes and a look of half-intelligence had taken its place.

"Whisky!" he grunted.

Klooch surged forward at the sound of his voice, but Jimmy drew her aside. The Indian got to his feet and felt tenderly of a skinned elbow. He looked at Jimmy and at Whitey and mumbled something under his breath.

"What did ye say?" asked Jimmy.

"*Halo kumtuks*," he replied slowly, shaking his head.

"You don't understand, eh?" grunted Jimmy. "Well, me red-corpuscled friend I'm glad ye've got to a point where ye'll admit it. Bud Deal came near knockin' the *kumtuks* out of ye for good. You *sabe* Bud Deal *mamook poh mesika?*"

The old Indian stared at Jimmy for a moment and then slowly touched his hand to his forehead.

"Bud Deal?" he asked, half-clucking, half-hissing the English name.

"Sure he shot ye," nodded Jimmy, and pointed at the horse and at Whitey. "Put him on the horse. You *sabe? Lolo kiuatan.*"

The Indian limped over to Whitey, picked him up in his arms and approached Whistler. Jimmy soothed the animal, while the Indian placed Whitey on the saddle.

"Now, that's the —— of it all!" grunted Jimmy. "He won't stay on and I've no rope." Jimmy scratched his head for a moment. "The Whistler will likely pitch like the divil, with two on his back; but mebbe I can hold him down until he gets used to it.

"*Mesika klatawa kopa kiuatan.*" This to the Indian, ordering him to ride on the horse.

Jimmy held Whistler tight while the Indian crawled on behind the saddle, steadying Whitey as he got on. The half-broke outlaw surged and humped its back wickedly, but Jimmy held its head tight, talking soothingly. The nature of the ground precluded any chance for Whistler to buck, and cause serious injury to himself, and after a few moments, Jimmy led the way around the base of the Devil's Pulpit, leading the horse by the reins, while the old Indian rode behind the saddle with both arms around the unconscious Whitey. Beside the horse paced the wolf-dog. Straight across the hills they went, heading for Oxbow—twelve miles away.

XI

BUD DEAL knew nothing about Jimmy's departure from the Box M, as no one had taken him into his confidence regarding the matter. Bud wondered why Jimmy was not sleeping in the bunk-house. He thought perhaps it was because he had been exposed as a thief and preferred to sleep elsewhere.

The next morning Bud discovered that Whistler was not in the corral and that Jimmy did not show up for breakfast. Pat did not eat breakfast with the rest. Mrs. Moore seemed preoccupied and Frawley ate silently, except to ask Bud to harness the buggy team for them.

Bud's nerves were getting frayed. He finished his meal and looked up to find Frawley staring at him rather quizzically.

"Where's Smith?" asked Bud.

Frawley's eyes did not shift from Bud's face as he replied.

"Yuh mean Devlin, don't yuh?"

Bud glanced up at Mrs. Moore. She was not looking at him. He looked back at Frawley.

"Well?"

"Devlin," said Frawley slowly. "Devlin went away last night."

"Where to?"

"He didn't say where he was goin'."

"Rode Whistler, didn't he?"

Frawley nodded and shoved back from the table.

"You hitch up the team for the women. Me and you will ride horseback. That hearin' is to-day and they'll likely want us both there. —— shame to keep folks in jail until some poker-playin' judge gets time to decide whether they're guilty enough to be tried or not."

"Aw, they'll likely get loose," grunted Bud, as he got up from the table. "If Jeff Garvin had twice as much sense he'd be half-witted."

Bud went down to the corral and Frawley turned to see Pat standing in the doorway. She was dressed for the trip.

"Did he say anything?" asked Pat, and then added, "Devlin?"

Frawley shook his head.

"No, he said it was better not to, little Pat. Did yuh notice that Klooch is gone?"

"I wonder if she followed him?" mused Pat aloud. "He was the only human being

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she ever showed affection for, and I—I hope she did go with him, Jud."

Frawley nodded.

"I sure hope she did. Bud will be here with the team in a minute."

The ride to Oxbow was uneventful. Pat drove the buggy team, while Frawley and Bud rode behind them over the rough road. Frawley noticed that Bud was wearing a shoulder-holstered gun in addition to the one in the holster at his hip. It looked to Frawley as if Bud was looking for or expecting trouble.

Bud was riding a buckskin horse, a short-coupled animal, and a very plain stock-saddle. He missed the feel of his dancing sorrel and the ornate saddle to which he had been accustomed.

Pat drove the team into the livery-stable, but Bud and Frawley dismounted at a hitch-rack, where a number of horses were already tied. There were more than the usual number of saddle-horses and vehicles at the racks, caused no doubt by the trial. A cowboy rode in behind Bud and dismounted.

"How are yuh, Bud," he called, but Bud did not hear him.

"'Chuck' Ames yellin' at yuh," said Jud Frawley, and Bud turned his head.

"Howdy, Chuck."

"Been tradin' horses with Garvin?" asked Ames.

Bud squinted at the cowboy, who was loosening his saddle cinch.

"Whatcha mean, Chuck?"

Ames removed his hat and wiped his brow.

"Just wonderin', thassall. I seen Garvin ridin' yore sorrel into town yesterday."

"My sorrel?" Bud looked at Frawley and back at Ames. "Yuh must 'a' been seein' things, Chuck."

'Yeah? Reckon I know that sorrel kinda well, don't I? The danged thing cost me two months' wages, when I bet that 'Blondy' Woods' black mare could beat him. Anyway, I'm bettin' it was yore sorrel, and yore saddle. I'd know that dew-dadded saddle anywhere."

Bud said nothing. Frawley turned and went toward the sidewalk, while Ames fished out the makings of a cigaret and rolled a smoke.

"I'd sure know that sorrel and saddle," repeated Ames as he licked the edge of the cigaret paper.

"——!" snapped Bud and started across the street.

Ames looked after him, an amused smile on his lean face.

"Whatcha know about that?" he grunted aloud. "Reckon I kinda rubbed the Box M dude the wrong way. And he's packin' two guns, too. Hm-m-m!"

Ames shook his head and turned toward the nearest saloon.

Bud was growing desperate. He had lied about the loss of his horse and saddle never thinking for a moment that Garvin had taken it. The whole thing was plain to Bud now. He had killed Garvin's horse in the coulée, and Garvin had taken his sorrel. Garvin had taken that money, too.

Bud turned into the nearest saloon and got a drink. He was not a drinker, but he needed bracing. Pete Havez was in the saloon, idly fingering a deck of cards. He watched Bud take several drinks alone, and also got a glimpse of the extra gun inside Bud's unbuttoned vest. Pete knew that when a man as well acquainted as Bud Deal was drank straight whisky silently and alone, it meant that he was priming himself for trouble.

Therefore Pete slid out of the place and went to find Jeff Garvin. He found Garvin in the Cheyenne saloon, leaning on a bar, talking with some cattlemen. Garvin was slightly intoxicated and in very good spirits. He caught Pete's signal from the doorway and came out as soon as he could get away.

"Bud Deal's in town," said Pete. "He's drinkin' whisky all alone and he's got two guns on him. Got a shoulder-holster on under his vest."

"Yeah?" Garvin shoved his sombrero back on his head and looked quizzically at his new deputy. "Did he say anythin', Pete?"

"He ain't talkin' to nobody," declared Pete. "Kinda makes yuh feel that he's a rattler, without rattles."

Garvin grinned widely. He had drunk just enough to make him reckless.

"Suppose he's huntin' trouble with me, Pete?"

"I dunno, Jeff; what do you reckon?"

"I reckon," said Garvin, pulling his hat down over his brow, "I reckon I better find out."

"Better do some thinkin' first," advised Pete; "Bud Deal's —— fast with a gun."

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Garvin seemed to consider this worthwhile advice. He was not sure that Bud knew of the lifted cache or not; but the chances were good that he did. He did not doubt that Bud knew he had taken the sorrel. Taking it all in all, Bud had reasons to hunt trouble with him.

"Deal ain't gittin' drunk, but he's likely gittin' plum bad," offered Pete.

"Cinch," grunted Garvin. "You watch him, Pete. Kinda move around with him, if yuh can, and if he gets too danged ornery we'll snub him up tight."

Pete grinned and nodded. He loved a task of this kind. It savored of real detective work, and also might offer him a chance to prove that he was some adept with the short gun himself. Pete got a drink at the next saloon and went hunting for Bud Deal.

He had no desire to face Bud in battle, but—if he could down Bud in a fight it would be the makings of him as a gunman. The "if" loomed large in front of Pete, and he decided to take things easy.

Bud Deal came out of the saloon door as Pete came down the sidewalk. Bud's hat was pulled low over his eyes and he stood in the middle of the sidewalk, hands on his hips. Pete's rapid walk slowed down as he neared Bud, and he turned to go into the door. But Bud stepped in front of him.

"Yuh found Garvin, did yuh?" rasped Bud.

"Gug-Garvin?" stammered Pete nervously.

"Yuh went out to find him," declared Bud, "and yuh wouldn't 'a' come back unless yuh found him."

Pete's eyes glittered dangerously, but he made no move. They were so close together that the first shot would not save its shooter unless it was instant death.

Suddenly Bud's left hand shot out and caught Pete by the shoulder, yanking him sidewise, and a fraction of a second later Bud's right fist hooked into Pete's jaw, knocking him backward against the building.

Bud stepped into him, yanked Pete's gun from its holster and tossed it into the middle of the street. Before the dazed deputy knew what was going on he was kicked into the street, where he fell flat on his face in the dust.

Bud turned on his heel, settled his hat more securely over his eyes and went down the street, while Pete sat up in the street and sneezed the dust out of his nose and mouth. He felt of his holster and looked foolishly around. Just beyond him lay his six-shooter.

He limped out to it, put it in its holster and went toward the sheriff's office, holding his jaw in one hand and caressing the slack of his pants with the other. He knew that his stealthy getaway from the saloon and his sudden return had told Bud where he had been. He decided that Bud was not only a dangerous fighter, but had brains as well.

Whisky seemed to have no effect on Bud, except to make him more cool. He had made up his mind that he was never going back to the Box M ranch. He could not explain the loss of his horse to them, without admitting that he lied. He gazed into an empty glass, eyes half-shut, and pondered the situation. He felt that there was a decided break between himself and Pat. There would not be enough evidence to hold Flint and Wild, and when they got back some one would be let out—and that some one would be he.

He was sure that Whitey was dead, which removed some worry from his mind. Garvin had taken the money. Who had removed the dead Indian? Bud filled his glass again and drank it in a single gulp. Should he kill Garvin? He took out a silver dollar and glanced at both sides. Why not let the dollar decide?

He flipped the dollar with his thumb. It clattered on the bar and rolled off the opposite side. The bartender stepped in close and glanced down.

"See which side's up!" growled Bud.

The bartender grinned widely.

"Can't be done, pardner; it fell in the wash-tub."

Bud whirled on his heel and started for the door.

"Yuh got four-bits comin'," yelled the bartender, but Bud went on out, while the bartender rolled up his sleeve and searched for the money.

"Every —— thing goes against me!" snarled Bud aloud as he got outside. "Mebbe I better go easy."

The click of poker-chips, the call of the dealer lured him into the Telluride barroom and gambling-parlor, where he appropriated a seat and bought chips. He lost twenty

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dollars in two hands and drew out of the game.

He had began to grow irritable. Bud was not naturally an optimist, and he fell an easy prey to extreme pessimism. He had a few more drinks, but whisky only dulled his nerves more and made his outlook a dreary indigo. He imagined that the whole world was against him and he laid his plans accordingly.

He would meet Garvin and force him to tell where that money was. Yes, he would likely kill Garvin after he had all this information, but that was a mere incident. He could take that money and fade out of the country. He wondered why he didn't do that before.

He went into a restaurant and ordered a meal, but his appetite deserted him and he left after drinking a cup of strong coffee. He met Pat and Mrs. Moore, but did not speak to them. Pat turned and looked curiously at him. A little farther on he met Frawley.

"Time to go up to the court-room, Bud," said Frawley.

"Court-room?" queried Bud absently. "Oh, yeah. Funny I forgot about it. ...en did yuh come in, Jud?"

Frawley half-smiled. He knew that Bud was drunk and had forgotten that they had ridden in together.

"Goin' up now?" asked Frawley.

Bud stared vacantly at him and nodded. They walked to the court-house and went up-stairs.

QUITE a crowd had already gathered in the court-room. Men spoke to Frawley and Bud, calling them by their first names. Frawley replied to the greetings, but Bud ignored them all. They went to the front of the room and took seats inside the railing, where Bud humped over, elbows on knees, and stared at the blank wall.

The place filled up in a short time. Dave Cleland, the prosecutor, came in and sat down beside Frawley. Bud merely glanced at him. Mrs. Moore and Pat arrived and sat down near. Another man came, a stranger. He was tall and thin, with gray hair and a heavy mustache, and wore "store" clothes. He sat down inside the railing. Bud lifted his eyes and looked at him. It was the engineer of that train.

He merely glanced at Bud, but to Bud it was a glance filled with meaning. Bud set his jaw and humped lower. He reviled himself for being a fool. He should have known that the engineer would be there. Suddenly he almost laughed aloud at the thought of the engineer being able to identify either of the two robbers. They had been heavily masked. Bud shook his head. He must be losing his reason—getting nerves.

Suddenly there came a stir in the room as the big, gray-haired judge came out of his chamber and sat down at his desk. Oxbow had no police judge before whom men might have a hearing; and it required that they be held until the arrival of the circuit judge.

Bud watched the door through which the prisoners would come, and his hand unconsciously loosened the pistol in his belt. The room had grown very quiet. The big clock on the wall tick-tocked loudly. Heavy boots creaked as men leaned forward to whisper to each other, and from here and there came the clink of spurs.

The door opened and Pete Havez stepped in and aside to let Flint and Wild Moore in, followed by Garvin. They took seats at a table. Whether by chance or design, Garvin sat down at the table, with Flint Moore between himself and Bud Deal.

The judge lost no time in opening the investigation. The engineer was sworn and took the stand. His testimony was already known. No, he did not recognize the prisoners as the men who had held up the train. He did not observe whether either of them was as large a man as Flint Moore.

The subject of pistols was brought up, and the engineer stated that one of them had a big pearl-handled Colt pistol, and he was willing to swear that it was a .45 caliber. He was shown the muzzles of three pistols, and was able to pick the .45 from a .38, .44 and .45.

Outside of that about the gun, the engineer's testimony was vague and useless to the prosecution. Garvin was called to the stand. He seemed reluctant to leave his place behind Flint Moore but went to the witness chair slowly, keeping his eyes on Bud, who did not look directly at him.

Garvin's testimony drew a laugh from the crowd, as the prosecutor drew out the details of the arrest and what followed. Oxbow knew that Flint and Wild had come to Oxbow, herding the sheriff and deputy unarmed.

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Garvin admitted that he had no evidence against them, other than they had ridden in from that direction on the day of the holdup. He said that he suspected them, from that reason and also from the reason that he knew that the Box M was in bad shape financially. Later on his suspicions were strengthened by learning that one of the robbers used a pearl-handled Colt .45. Flint Moore owned such a gun.

The court asked for the gun as evidence and Garvin stated that the gun had never been found, and intimated that some one had secured it ahead of him and concealed it.

Flint Moore took the stand, after Garvin had gone back to his seat, and told his story. He had no alibi. They had been within a few miles of the railroad. There was nothing further to tell. Wild was not called. Frawley was put on the stand and drew a laugh, with his description of the arrest. He knew nothing about the gun.

"I will put Bud Deal on the stand," said Cleland.

Bud looked up foolishly. He had not expected to be put on the stand. He got slowly to his feet and walked to the chair, where he took the oath. Cleland's voice seemed miles away, as Bud looked into the sea of faces. Cleland was saying something about the gun, and Bud heard himself saying that the gun had been hanging at the head of Flint Moore's bed after the hold-up. He could see Garvin leering at him; but his tongue ran on.

"Somebody stole the gun. Mebbe it was Devlin. He had a .45."

"What Devlin?" asked Cleland.

"The Devlin, who was sent to the pen. He's out again. Been working on the Box M, under the name of Smith."

The court-room buzzed.

"Who hired him?" asked Cleland.

Bud pointed at Flint Moore.

"He did. I told him——"

Flint Moore surged to his feet.

"I've never seen this Devlin. Deal told me that——"

"Order in the court!" roared the judge. "There is only one witness chair!"

"When did this Devlin come to the Box M?" asked Cleland.

"The night of the robbery," replied Bud.

"Where is he now?"

Bud looked down at Mrs. Moore and Pat, and shook his head.

"I dunno. Frawley gave him an outfit last night and started him out of the country, I reckon."

Cleland turned and looked at Garvin.

"Did you know that Devlin was in the country?"

Garvin smiled and shook his head.

"I think he's a —— liar!" snapped Bud, leaning forward in his chair.

Some cowboy in the back of the room cheered and the crowd laughed heartily, while the judge pounded on his desk and roared for order.

"Another outburst like that and I shall clear the court!" roared the judge, and turned to Bud. "You are not up there to give opinions, young man!"

Garvin's lips were white with wrath and his right hand was clenched around the butt of his gun under the table.

'Where were you on the day of the robbery?" asked Cleland.

Bud jerked up his head at the question and stared at the prosecutor.

"Me? Why, I—I was out on the range."

"Down near Snake Creek?"

'Say, you can't put no deadwood on me!" snarled Bud. "I don't know anythin' about the robbery."

Cleland grinned. He was making Bud angry, and an angry witness is easy to tangle.

"What kind of a gun did you carry that day?"

Bud's face paled and he half-closed his eyes, as he stared at Cleland. This was getting too personal for Bud and he set his nerves to carry it off right.

Suddenly there came a commotion at the door and everyone turned. A voice swore openly, wonderingly, and the crowd at the back of the room parted to let a strange party through.

It was the old Indian, a ghastly caricature of blood, dirt and matted hair, carrying the half-conscious form of Whitey Allen on his back. At the Indian's heels came the wolf-dog, and limping behind them came Jimmy Devlin.

Every one in the court-room stared at them as they came up the aisle, straight toward the judge. Bud Deal, white-faced, his eyes wide and staring, got out of his chair like a sleep-walker and moved aside as the Indian came slowly up and placed Whitey in the witness-chair. Then the Indian slumped down on the edge of the

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platform, while Devlin stepped in, facing the court.

Pat started to her feet, but Frawley grasped her arm, drawing her back. Garvin half-sprawled across the table, gawping at them.

"Sure, I think I've come to the right place," said Jimmy slowly. "We had a divil's own trip, and all for the lack of a pencil."

Whitey had opened his eyes and looked around. He was so weak that it was only with the greatest effort that he could remain erect in the chair.

"We made it, Whitey," said Jimmy triumphantly. "This is the place to talk."

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the judge.

Bud's eyes blinked rapidly as he stared at the Indian he thought he had killed and at Whitey, who must have perished in the cloud-burst. His arms twitched and he tried to make himself believe that it was only a nightmare.

"Can ye talk, Whitey?" asked Jimmy. "Try it, pardner."

Whitey moistened his lips and swallowed with difficulty. After a few attempts he said weakly, hoarsely:

"Jimmy Devlin wasn't guilty. I—robbed—that—train—last—year. He—he—gave—me—a—chance."

"Eh? What's that?" questioned Cleland, while every one leaned forward to hear what Whitey was saying.

Pat had gotten out of her chair and was standing with her hands clenched in front of her as she stared at Jimmy.

"Devlin—wasn't—guilty." said Whitey weakly. "Don't—you — believe—me?"

"What does this all mean?" questioned the judge!

Men were getting out of their seats and crowding forward. Bud's eyes shifted as he tried to see a way out of the room, but all exits were blocked by the curious crowd.

Cleland turned to the judge.

"He means that Devlin wasn't guilty of the crime he was convicted of, judge."

Whitey nodded and tried to smile, but the smile faded as his eyes turned and he saw Bud Deal. Whitey did not have an ounce of strength left, but every bit of hate in his dying body flashed to his face and his weak voice shrilled:

"Bud Deal, you're a dirty thief! You lifted that cache! You——" Whitey slumped, exhausted—arms falling on either side of the chair.

Bud leaned back against the railing, as if bracing himself, one hand clutching the lapel of his unbuttoned vest and the thumb of the other hand hooked over his belt above the holster. Men moved silently and swiftly from behind him. Garvin got half-way to his feet, one hand on the table. Jimmy stood easily beside Whitey's chair, but his good-natured smile was not in evidence. The big Colt rested in its holster, just in front of his thigh. He was looking at Bud Deal as he spoke directly to him.

"Deal, ye made a bad mistake, when ye didn't be sure ye killed the Injun."

Bud's body tensed, but he made no reply.

"Whitey told me all about it, Bud Deal. The old buck had a hard head and the bullet played ring-around-the-rosie."

Jimmy looked at Garvin.

"Sheriff, ye may as well turn them folks loose and quit tryin' to fool the law."

'Whatcha mean?" snarled Garvin, but his heart sank within him.

Pete Havez had moved out of his chair and was backed against the railing, ready to draw.

"Judge, the Moores are innocent," stated Jimmy, keeping his eyes on Garvin and Bud. "There's a showdown comin' real soon and I want ye to know things. Deal, don't ye move a finger. Garvin, you're too nervous to shoot straight. Deputy, ye better keep out of this, 'cause it don't concern ye."

Jimmy's voice seemed to sing-song, without any particular inflexion.

"Will somebody get a doctor for Whitey Allen? He's got a lot of things to tell yet, and they're worth hearin'. He was one of the men who held up that train and he got shot. His pardner double-crossed him by liftin' the cache, and now Whitey wants to clear the Moores and put the deadwood where it belongs."

"What cache did Bud lift?" asked Frawley.

"That's a lie!" Bud fairly screamed. "I didn't lift any cache!"

Jimmy held up his hand for silence as he shook his head in confirmation of Bud's denial.

"Whitey Allen was wrong there. He thought that Bud had double-crossed him and taken the money, but Bud did not take it."

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Jimmy turned his head slightly and looked at Garvin.

"Do ye want me to tell who did take that money?"

Garvin's lips barely moved as he said—"What do yuh mean?"

Jimmy leaned forward a little and his right hand came up a trifle higher than his waist, fingers spread. Bud Deal had seen Jimmy do that before.

"Ye know what I mean!" Jimmy's voice snapped in the silent room.

Whitey Allen seemed to regain consciousness for a moment at the sound of Jimmy's voice and his eyes opened.

"I—I'm glad," he croaked, "I'm glad it was Bud Deal instead of me that killed the fireman. He shot——"

Bud Deal's move was too swift to follow and Whitey's confession was never finished. The windows of the little court-room shook with the concussion of Bud's heavy pistol and Whitey pitched forward out of his chair.

Garvin's hand swung up, clutching a pistol, but he was too late.

Jimmy's hand flashed up holding the big gun, but Frawley had flung himself into Bud and Jimmy could not shoot without danger of hitting Frawley, who seemed to have missed his tackle and was clawing desperately to clutch Bud's gun.

Bud whirled toward Garvin, whose hand had swung up from beside the table, and the fact that Garvin shot wide-armed and cramped by the table caused him to miss Jimmy by scant inches.

A fraction of a second later Jimmy shot—so close to the report of Garvin's gun that few people knew that both men had fired. Garvin crumpled back in his chair and his pistol thudded to the floor.

Pete Havez, ignorant of Garvin's reasons, but thinking it was his duty, was shooting at Jimmy—shooting wildly. Jimmy whirled and shot once more—shot almost over Flint Moore's head, and Pete Havez spun on his heel, fired a wild shot at the ceiling and draped himself across the railing.

Bud Deal had torn away from Frawley, tripping him as he got away, and had fired twice at Jimmy—twice at a distance of ten feet, and missed—missed because the old Indian was diving at him, arms outstretched.

He swung his pistol and struck the Indian over the head, kicked at him as he fell, and then whirled, vaulted the railing and tore for the rear door, with his two guns driving back the crowd.

But the crowd was willing to get back. Many of them had slid down between the seats, flat on the floor to be safe from flying lead. Bud raced for the door, where he whirled and shot the length of the room at Jimmy, who was vaulting the railing, and the bullet splintered a window back of the jury-box.

Klooch darted past Jimmy as he went out of the door and down the stairs. Bud raced for the hitch-rack, which was across the street from the court-room, and was half-way to the horses, when Jimmy came out the lower door.

Bud whirled, as the wolf-dog ran into him, and shot almost into her face. The bullet ripped along her head and the flash of powder blinded her; but she had stopped him in his flight.

The crowd had rushed to the windows of the court-room. Some one threw a chair through one of them, to view the street better, and the chair crashed into the dust near Jimmy.

Bud was standing about half-way across the street, with his feet braced far apart, gun held hip-high. His hat was gone. He had dropped one gun in his flight, and now he had only one cartridge left in that gun, with which he had done all his shooting—five shots.

Klooch was groveling in the street, trying to paw the pain from her burned head. Jimmy was moving slowly toward Bud, his gun swinging easily in his hand, when out of the lower door appeared the Indian, coming in behind Jimmy.

His face was a welter of fresh blood from the blow, which Bud had dealt him with a gun-barrel; but he did not waver, as he came into the street, head held low, his back bent, arms held wide, as if to grasp something.

A voice from one of the windows called a hoarse warning to Jimmy; but the Indian walked past him, giving Jimmy no heed, going straight toward Bud.

Bud lifted his gun and took deliberate aim at the advancing Indian, but the Indian came on unfaltering. Bud's arm shook with the strain of holding the gun. He could not pull the trigger.

He had only one shot left. The Indian was unarmed. It flashed through Bud's

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mind that Jimmy was the one to shoot. He could use the empty gun on the unarmed Indian.

Now the Indian was between Bud and Jimmy, coming slower. Bud sprang aside to fire his last shot, but he had forgotten the wolf-dog. His feet tangled in a squirming snapping bulk and he fell heavily, his gun slipping from his hand as he fell.

As he sprawled in the dust, the Indian dived into him. For a moment they seemed to tangle in a whirl of arms and legs, and then the Indian staggered to his feet, with his arms locked around Bud's body. They swayed for a moment. Like a flash the Indian shifted his hold, lifted Bud off his feet and threw him upside down; and before any one could anticipate his next move he picked Bud up in his arms, slung him across his shoulder and ran up the street toward another hitch-rack. Bud was as limp as Whitey had been.

Jimmy watched them go, but made no effort to stop the Indian. He caught Klooch by the scruff of the neck and drew her to him, while he knelt in the street and tried to examine her burns and bruises. The crowd poured out of the court-room and filled the street. Frawley and Pat were the first ones to reach Jimmy. Men were yelling at each other, running for their horses.

"My ——!" exclaimed Frawley. "Look at the Indian! He's on Whistler and he's got Bud in his arms!"

Jimmy glanced up the street. The Indian had mounted the roan outlaw and had Bud draped across the saddle in front of him. Men ran out from across the street and tried to stop them, but the Whistler whirled and came straight down the street, running hog-wild, with reins flying. More men tried to stop them, but Whistler never wavered, while the Indian leaned forward, both arms holding Bud's limp body, riding out of town like a tornado.

"The Injun wants to pay Bud for that shot in the dark," panted Jimmy. 'The old boy got a nasty bump on the head out at the Pulpit and it kinda cleared his mind. Whitey told him that Bud shot him."

Men were mounting to give chase, yelling orders, asking questions. Pat turned to Jimmy, her face gray with the horror of it all, and took hold of his arm. Flint Moore came up to them, staring at Jimmy and Pat, who were looking into each other's faces. Mrs. Moore and Wild came to them.

Horses were passing them, showering the dust and gravel of the street as they started out to follow the Indian and his burden. Klooch sniffed at Jimmy and stood up, putting her paws on his chest, while her burned eyes blinked open and she gave a short bark.

"Glory be!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Look, Pat! The wolf-dogs eyes are open again. Oh, ye blessed wild divil! Ye came to me in the night, so ye did."

"A lot of eyes have been opened today, Jimmy," answered Pat slowly, as she turned to her father and said, "Dad, meet Jimmy Devlin."

Flint Moore squinted into Jimmy's eyes, as they gripped hands.

"Son," said Flint Moore softly, "why didn't you kill Bud Deal?"

Jimmy shook his head slowly.

"Sure, I'm not clear in me own mind yet. Mister Frawley got before me in the court-room and I could not shoot. Out here—" Jimmy glanced across the street—"out here I had no fear of his gun. Bedad, I believe I thought it was empty, and—and—" Jimmy smiled wistfully— "and who am I to be shootin' up train-robbers?"

Wild Moore stepped in and held out his hand just as Dave Cleland bustled into them breathlessly.

"Garvin got it through the shoulder!" he exclaimed. "Pete Havez wasn't so lucky, but he'll get well. Whitey Allen must have been almost dead before Bud shot him. Now, I want to shake hands with Devlin. I'll see that you get complete exoneration, Devlin."

Cleland bustled away, spilling half a package of flake-cut tobacco over the edge of his pipe-bowl and trying to light the empty pipe.

Frawley turned to Flint Moore.

"I reckon I'll get my horse and follow the chase, Flint. I'll drop in to see yuh in a few days."

"Why—why—" faltered Flint.

"No, I've resigned," grinned Frawley. "The Box M can't afford to pay wages to more than one man, and I reckon Devlin's goin' to quit bein' a boomer."

Frawley walked swiftly toward the hitch-rack. Jimmy looked at Pat slyly and a sober expression crossed his homely face as she asked, "Are you, Jimmy?"

"I'm thinkin'," said Jimmy slowly, "that

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I'd kinda like to be able to answer folks, when they ask me where I came from—and the Box M is easy to say."

XII

IT WAS twilight again at the Box M, and the Thunder Range had flung its long shadows across valley and hill. Questions had been asked and answered, until every one at the ranch understood the things that had come to pass during the past few days. Flint Moore and his wife sat in the little living-room, facing each other across the table in silent contemplation of the future.

Wild stood in the lighted doorway, leaning against the door-sill, looking at Pat, who was sitting on the porch steps. A string of shadowy cattle figures drifted down past the fence, going to water. From somewhere a calf bawled plaintively. High overhead a number of night hawks skirled as they circled swiftly in search of food.

From down at the bunk-house came the voice of Jimmy Devlin singing "The Holy City." It was a new song to the range-land—sung in a slurring tenor, which seemed to melt away into the night.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your voice and sing."

"That is he," said Mrs. Moore, leaning across the table toward her husband. "Could a man who sings like that be bad, Flint?"

Flint Moore shook his head:

"No, mother. If Pat wants to marry him—he can't be very bad. Listen, Mary."

Jimmy's voice came clearly to them—

"The world grew dark with mystery and all around was still, when the shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill."

Pat lifted her head. A man was riding in from down by the gate. He drew rein and listened to the song until it was finished and rode up to the porch. It was Frawley. He dismounted and came up to the porch, calling a soft greeting to Pat and Wild.

Flint Moore and his wife heard him and came outside.

"I just stopped for a minute," said Frawley. "The rest of the posse went straight back to Oxbow."

"Did you catch the Indian?" asked Flint.

Frawley shook his head.

"No. We trailed them to the foot of the Devil's Pulpit, where we found the horse; and a little later we found them both, lying at the foot of the Pulpit—dead. I think the Indian tried to climb the rock with Bud and slipped, or they fought up there."

"Well," said Flint Moore softly, "maybe it was best that way, Frawley."

"Yeah, I reckon. Well, I'll be goin' on, folks. Good-night."

Frawley rode away into the night. The rest of the family went into the house, leaving Pat alone on the porch, as a shadowy figure came from the bunk-house and walked slowly toward her, with the wolf-dog beside him. He stopped a short distance away and appeared to hesitate.

"Who goes there?" challenged Pat softly.

Jimmy chuckled and replied—

"The ex-range-boomer."

"Where are you from?"

"The Box M," said Jimmy quickly, "where I hope to stay so long they'll assess me as personal property."

"If they do," said Pat softly, "I'll be willing to pay the taxes."

Then Klooch blinked her sore eyes and wondered in her own dumb way whether she wasn't a bit fooled into thinking that Jimmy was a one-dog man. He seemed to forget her for so long.

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THE RIGHT HAND OF SIDI DOWHDI

BY GEORGE E. HOLT

Author of "Absent Without Leave," "For His Family Honor," etc.

IN THE little cubby-hole on the Tangier main street, in which Hadj Hamed ibn Omar—he who took the two friends of the All Highest into Sus as Christian slaves and sold them worthless paper for much money—sits and pretends to sell *djellaba* and slippers to his fellow Moors, one is apt to meet most peculiar people. Or so I thought—and no doubt they, likewise. And being a friend of Hamed—the word means something in Morocco—there was always a felt prayer-rug for me to squat upon and hot tea with green mint in it could be summoned expeditiously from the black boy who vended it up and down the street.

Of course, I was a foreigner and an infidel, in this land of a surviving medieval Orient; but I was also *Sahibi* to Hamed ibn Omar, with the result that I did not understand matters which I could not help overhearing. Very often, after his visitor had drawn his robe about him and gone away, Hamed would send for tea, say, "And that is So and So," and fall to telling a tale. As his visitors were men of all ages, colors and shades, of all the creeds and tribes of Morocco—which is as varied as the patchwork quilt of New England—these tales were of no little variety.

There came dignified pale-faced Moors of obviously high station, wrapped in stately white *k'sas;* tobacco-brown Berbers from the Atlas foot-hills, with bare legs, and shaven heads—except for the scalp-locks by which Allah eventually was to jerk them into Paradise—and short, coarsely woven *djellaba* embroidered with *assagai* as a guard against evil jinn; coal-black negroes in any and all kinds of unclean garments. Hill men and plains men and city men, of great importance or of little importance, but all of some account in the great game always being carried on between Morocco and the infidel world, or among the Faithful themselves.

There one day came an elderly man, who appeared to keep his bearded face concealed in his *sulham*, and who used his left hand to lift his tea glass, and for all other purposes. Which peculiarity I later mentioned to Hadj Hamed.

"When one has but one hand," replied Hamed, "one hand must serve. That is Sidi Achmed Dowhdi, and the manner in which he came to have but one hand is a tale which is not without interest. As you will unquestionably urge me to relate the story——".

And he laughed a little, and fell to telling of the affair, which I will retell to you without much of his running commentary, some of which would be a little too blunt, perhaps, for western ears.

There was, of course, a woman in the case; wherefore Sidi Dowhdi was fortunate in losing only a hand instead of his head. (Hadj Hamed must take blame for that observation.) It happened many years ago, when Sidi Dowhdi, who was not a Sidi

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then, but only Achmed Dowhdi, was only half as old as he now is, and when Si Hadj Drees ben Sliman was basha of the town of Dar-el-Baida, in Shawia Province. Achmed was a native of Shawia, and had gone to *madrasah*, and to the University at Fez, where he became scholar and *taleb*—a scribe—and, one other thing.

He became very expert in the imitation of other men's handwriting, particularly their signatures, and very clever at the reproduction of their seals. Considering that fact, the great Kaid Menehbi, who later became Vizier of the Treasury, took him into the service. Achmed Dowhdi, the *taleb*, became prosperous, and of some standing in the province, but not, of course, to compare in any way with Hadj Drees ben Sliman, the basha of Dar-el-Baida.

But their paths crossed, or, rather, they led to a common point. Which was a woman. Now, you need realize that this is much more marvelous a matter in Morocco, where girls are very, very carefully shut up and guarded, than in Christianland, where they are encouraged to display themselves upon every occasion. The high-class Moorish girl never leaves her father's windowless house and walled garden until she goes to the windowless house and walled garden of her husband. No man save those of her family is permitted to see her. Thus is Romance repressed.

But, the flat house-tops are the women's playground, as through all the East, and, although in most places it yet means death for a man to go upon a roof, it is to be expected that the men, who made the laws, would likewise occasionally assume some risk in evading them. And as Romance grows in a walled garden or on a house-top, if there be a girl in either place, the women do not much bother themselves with helping the men to enforce the restrictions. Consequently, it has happened, as it did in this matter, that a girl's face becomes known to a man—or perhaps to two men.

Zayla ben't Sanhadji was the girl, and she was very beautiful. That is all you need to know about her, because she died before the story was finished, and consequently is of no further importance. Hadj Drees ben Sliman had seen her face upon the house-top, and had determined to possess her. Achmed Dowdhi also had seen, and his heart burned within him. Hadj Drees, the basha, appointed Zayla's father an administrator in the customs at Dar-el-Baida, arranged for his accounts to be found improperly kept, and then offered him immunity from prison in exchange for the girl. Very properly Zayla's father accepted Hadj Drees as a son-in-law, despite his somewhat malodorous reputation, because otherwise Hadji Drees would have thrown him into the casbah and taken the girl anyhow. In that case he would not have married her.

All of which came promptly to the ears of Achmed Dowhdi, the *taleb*, and for a time made him witless. But after ravings came reflection, and with reflection, decision. The day preceding that on which the basha was to send for Zayla drew to its close.

When it grew dark there was a knocking upon the door of the house of Zayla's father, and he was summoned by his servants, who told him that a messenger of the basha demanded to see him. He was an old man, and had been much shaken by the actions of ben Sliman, and was now almost as much afraid of the basha's messenger as of the basha himself.

Driving the servants away, the one who appeared as ben Sliman's messenger spoke quickly and forcibly. There were matters, he said, not necessary to explain, which had changed the plans; the important thing was that the girl must be taken to the basha's palace, without a moment's delay.

Now, even in Morocco, a man is not foolish enough, although he be as frightened as was Zayla's father, to turn his daughter over to whomsoever might pound upon the door and say, "Give her to me." The old man, courteously enough, demanded proof that the stranger was really the messenger of the basha. At this the messenger cursed himself for an absent-minded fool, and, reaching into his *shakarah*, brought forth a letter addressed to the old man, and sealed with a big red seal.

"I should have given this first, instead of talking like a parrot," he apologized. "Naturally you will know the seal of his Excellency the Basha."

The old man nodded and broke open the letter.

"And the signature as well." Again the old man agreed. All was in order.

"This letter I will keep," he said, putting it into his belt, "as my instructions from his Excellency." To which the messenger agreed that such was the course of wisdom.

The result of all this was that a very little

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while later, Zayla, bundled in garments so that not even her little finger showed—although in the head-coverings there was a slit as big as that finger is thick, for her to look through—was seated upon a donkey, at one side of which walked Zaidee, her negro female slave, and on the other—Achmed Dowhdi. Although this latter Zayla did not yet know.

You may imagine—for I do not propose to attempt to describe—all the things that happened when the basha came to get the girl and was handed a letter bearing an excellent imitation of his signature and his seal. The father grew quite mad, and the basha three times as mad as he, and ten times as angry, and there were curses and shouts and wild runnings-about. Nor were matters made quieter by the arrival of Zaidee, the negro slave, who had been sent on some fool's errand by the messenger, and had never seen him or her charge again.

Such a tale deserves a good ending—and the basha was a pig without doubt—but truth precedes art. Wherefore it needs be related that the basha finally discovered Achmed Dowhdi and Zayla at the house of Achmed's uncle in Beni Toozin, and took them both by force. On the way back to Dar-el-Baida—for she knew what fate awaited her now, and, besides had come to love Achmed a very great deal—Zayla threw herself from a high cliff and was no more.

Hadj Drees ben Sliman, the basha, desired much the life of Achmed, but, as the Menehbi objected, he had to be content with a judgment under the *lex talionis* of the country—the law that in case of a crime the offending member shall suffer. Achmed could not be punished for having saved Zayla from the basha; but for forgery—Sidi Dowhdi must manage with only one hand.

THE LAND GRABBERS

by Hugh Pendexter

THAT the Indians had long memories was shown when St. Clair, as Governor of the Northwest Territory, called a grand council of the Ohio Indians at Fort Harmar on the Muskegum in December, 1788. No sooner had the council opened than old Shandotto, speaking in behalf of all nations present, declared the white men had cheated the Indians by the ox-hide purchase.

This referred to an early request of settlers to be given ground large enough to build a fire upon, or as much as would be encompassed by an ox-hide. The pact was made and the hide was cut into thin strips, very thin; and never before did a red man imagine so much land could be inclosed by one hide.

The governor was next reminded of the Walking Purchase, signed in Philadelphia in 1737. This was to substantiate an alleged treaty of 1686. "On this rotten title the proprietors laid claim to a valuable tract of land on the right bank of the Delaware," says Parkman, the historian.

But if the deed of 1686 was of dubious validity there was no doubt whatever concerning the methods employed by the proprietors, the sons of William Penn. Unlike their father they were land-sharks and would stop at no measures to separate the Indian from his holdings. It would have been bad enough to have extended their title through the alleged deed of the preceding century; but to make a fat killing they indulged in a little game. The western boundary of the region claimed was to extend from Neshaminy Creek as far as a man could walk in a day and a half. Hence the name, the "Walking Purchase."

The trick worked by the Penns was the building of a smooth road and employing a trained runner. The runner went into training and made himself familiar with the route he was to cover. It should have been called the "Sprinting Purchase." The distance traveled by the runner astounded and angered the Delawares, and it was necessary for the proprietors to call in the Iroquois and drive the tribe off the land. In latter years, when new treaties were proposed, the Indians reverted to this and similar bargains.

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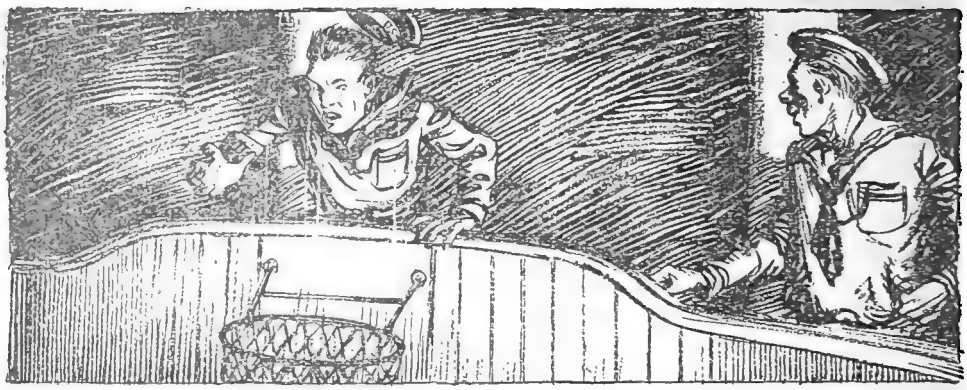

WHEN BOSUN MEETS BOSUN

BY R. DE S. HORN

Author of "When the Storm Flags Flutter," "Off Sawtooth Shoals," etc.

IT WAS a typical navy yard December morning—bright, cheerful, and tremendously noisy. Carrier cranes rumbled, air hammers clattered, yard locomotives puffed and protested. Nowhere was there a surcease from the bustle and din of the Winter overhaul.

But, yes. There was one spot that might be said to be almost calm and peaceful; or, if not peaceful, comparatively so. The long coal dock to which the dreadnaught *Samoa* was moored presented for the moment the unnatural aspect of restful stillness.

No air hammers drummed their metallic discords, no locomotives snorted along. The expanse of cement and trestlework was almost deserted; along its whole extent only one living being appeared, and he, a somber-looking individual in faded dungarees, was kneeling, back toward shore, over a hawser-encircled mooring-bollard.

It was an ideal moment.

Bosun Riley of the *Alaska*, having completely satisfied himself that the remainder of the *Samoa's* crew was indeed at morning quarters, left the shadow of the upturned cutter he had been hiding behind and ventured on to the open causeway. Very stealthily he stole along until he was within a half-dozen feet of the unsuspecting toiler. Then he disrupted the stillness with a loud jarring laugh.

"My gosh! Tying up the old bum-boat just like she was a reg'lar ship! What's the idea? 'Fraid she'll bust adrift, and then some of these river rats'll salvage her for old iron?"

At the first exclamation Bosun Kerrigan of the *Samoa* had straightened and whirled in a startled flurry. Now his weather-beaten features slowly contorted themselves into a horrible sneer.

"Well! If it ain't the old 'Apple-Knocker' hisself! Howdy, Apple-Knocker. How's all the rest of the Apple-Knockers over to the Garbage Can this morning?"

Garbage Can!

Bosun Riley gulped spasmodically.

"Husky enough to knock the everlastin' knot-holes outer the *Samoa*, anyway, b'jiminy! If you don't believe it, just bring your sea-bums over across the basin and see what the *Alaska* 'll do for 'em!"

"Is tha-a-at so?"

Bosun Kerrigan was drawlingly sarcastic. "Say, Apple-Knocker," he added, "any time that Garbage Can of yours can beat the *Samoa* at anything there is, from shootin' marbles to smashin' targets, I'll—I'll ship for a spud-peeler in the Swiss Navy for the rest of my life, I will!"

"You will, huh?" was the swift query. "Then come on, and make it a reg'lar bet! How much cold hard cash have you got that says the *Alaska* ain't a better sportin' ship than your old hunk o' scrap-iron here—huh?"

"How much cash we got?" repeated Kerrigan contemplatively. "Well, for one thing, we got about eighty-five hundred dollars over here that was on your payrolls before that last football game. Ain't that enough to interest you?"

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"Sure thing—if you ain't scared to bet," returned Riley slightingly.

"Well, don't you let that worry you none," was the considerate advice. "Ain't nobody's money we'd ruther spend over here than the *Alaska's*. When the time comes you won't have to shove it down our pockets. But what's the hurry? Baseball can't start till we get to Cuba in February."

It was seemingly a staid enough remark. But Bosun Riley went impolitely off into a fit of intense merriment that brought a suspicious glint into Bosun Kerrigan's eye.

"Well—what's tickling you, now?"

"You are!" enlightened Riley. "Claimin' to be a sportin' ship, over here! My gosh! Don't you play nothing aboard this tub in the Wintertime, except crokinole and drop-the-handkerchief?"

"Huh?" The *Samoa's* bosun stared uncomprehendingly. "Well—what do you Apple-Knockers play in the Wintertime, besides crokinole and drop-the-handkerchief? Huh?"

Bosun Riley continued to shake.

"Don't tell me you never heard of basketball! Didn't you know the fleet athletic officer was tryin' to get up a team for it on every ship in the outfit? That's why I dropped over—to see what's the chances of us two gettin' up a game. And while it's just as new to us as it is to you, I'm willin' to bet we can get up a team on the *Alaska* that can trim the socks off any team you fellows can get up on the *Samoa* here!"

Bosun Kerrigan greeted the suggestion with scornful laughter.

"Basketball? Basketball!" he sneered. "Say—why don't you make it tiddlywinks? That's a good exciting game for sailors, now!"

Quick as a flash Bosun Riley seized his opportunity.

"All right; tiddlywinks, then—if you're more used to playin' that! Just say 'when,' and we'll come over and wallop this tiddlywinks team of yours, too," he taunted. "Nobody ever said the *Alaska* was scared to take a dare!"

Bosun Kerrigan fairly boiled at the insinuation; his face turned to a deep purple and his eyes threatened to pop out of their sockets. He gave every indication of being on the verge of apoplexy.

"H-h-huh? What's that?" he gasped. "You mean to say we're scared? Say—when do you want to play this basketball game?"

With a slick tongue Riley put on the finishing touches.

"Well, if you really mean business——"

"Business? Sure we mean business!" bellowed the *Samoa's* representative. "It's a new game to us, but I guess we can learn it as quick as a bunch of Apple-Knockers can, any day! Come on with your offer, so I can go see our athletic officer and fix it up official."

And so, with occasional interruption for persiflage and uncomplimentary personalities, the terms of the prospective contest were at length arrived at—subject, of course, to the approval of the ships' athletic officers.

The game was to be played the second Tuesday night following, and the yard Torpedo School building was selected as the scene of hostilities, the challenger engaging to obtain all necessary permits.

To insure each team a sufficient amount of uninterrupted and unobserved practise, the *Alaska* was to hold preliminary workouts at the Sands Street Y. M. C. A., while the *Samoa* was to restrict herself to the Torpedo School playing floor.

Lastly and—inasmuch as the Navy Regulations forbid betting—secretly, it was agreed that the *Alaska* should be accorded the opportunity of wiping out—or doubling—her losses of the previous football season. That there might be no dispute over the settlement of the wager both bosuns agreed to go together that same afternoon and deposit their respective wagers, in cash, with Sergeant Perkins of the yard marine guard, who bore a marked reputation for incorruptible honesty and integrity.

It was an air-tight agreement and subject only to the inconsistencies of the powers that be. After he had shaken hands on it, Bosun Kerrigan immediately departed for the *Samoa's* wardroom to push the matter with his lawful superiors. But Bosun Riley lingered for a moment, gazing after his rival's retreating form. Then with a sudden chuckle he turned away, made his way rapidly around the basin to the *Alaska's* after gangway and clambered on board.

The officer-of-the-deck curtly acknowledged his salute, and he dropped down a ladder to the gun-deck below. A moment later he was entering a secluded gun-compartment on the port side.

That he was expected was evident, for the half-dozen men there assembled surged to

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their feet as he entered. But apparently the bosun had neither time nor explanations to waste. Disregarding completely individual inquiries he addressed the assembly as a whole, ending with the terse statement:

"And then he got so mad he couldn't see straight. He swallowed it whole—hook and all! He's even going to give us even money on it! So now it's up to you fellows to hustle the money together if you want to make a killing! It's got to be ready by three o'clock sharp—and I got to go aft and talk the game up with 'Holy Joe'!"

But a few moments later, in the chaplain's stateroom, the account that the bosun gave was quite different from anything he had said in the gun-compartment.

For one thing he made no reference whatever to any inter-ship wager, nor did he mention the discussion thereon that was even now going on in the compartment forward. Neither did he mention the long exchange of insult and counter-insult with the *Samoa's* bosun that had preceded the actual challenge and its acceptance.

And Holy Joe, who was the *Alaska's* chaplain, and who was yet again the ship's athletic officer, rubbed his hands approvingly over his assistant's report; he had long shared the fleet athletic officer's ambition to put basketball on a firm footing as a fleet sport.

"Fine, Riley; that's fine! I'm delighted to hear the ships are taking so much interest in the sport; I was afraid basketball might not appeal to the men right off. You think they'll be interested enough to turn out for the game, then, do you?"

"Interested?" repeated the bosun emphatically. "Why, I bet there'll be as much excitement over this game almost as there was over that football game last Fall!"

A tiny frown wrinkled the chaplain's brow. The bosun hastened to repair his error.

"Oh, no, sir; I didn't mean *that!* There'll be plenty of excitement all right, but I didn't mean there'd be any fightin'—leastways if there is, it won't be us that starts it. I'll promise you that, sir."

It was a promise in the nick of time. The chaplain's brow cleared.

"All right, Riley—but I couldn't sanction any game that might end in another disgraceful free-for-all, you know. Now that that's settled, though, if you'll give me the details—the time and place, you know—why——"

Three-quarters of an hour later the *Alaska's* bosun, his own mission fulfilled, waited on the quarter-deck for his superior's return from the commandant's office. The *Alaska's* share of the wager was accumulating rapidly below; there was no doubt whatever that the specified sum would be subscribed. All that now remained to be done was to obtain the commandant's permission for the use of the Torpedo School court.

No other place would serve so well. In fact, for reasons of personnel and discipline and ship's routine, no other place at all would satisfy the game's requirements. But that the commandant would give his approval unquestioningly was by no means a foregone conclusion. Bosun Riley knew only too well that previous *Alaska-Samoa* contests had not paved the way for any too great enthusiasm on the part of yard authorities anywhere.

There had been the football game at Norfolk, for instance—a game wherein several unexpected and unscheduled events had occurred. The *Samoa* had won the game; the *Alaska* had questioned the methods employed in winning it. Naturally, with ship spirit at a high temperature and crew attendance at a maximum, there had been a slight mix-up after the game. But most certainly there had been no intention to damage the local scenery to the extent that had occurred; that was a mere incident to the argument.

Nevertheless the Norfolk commandant had criticized the participants warmly.

Then there had been the Thames Street debate over the boat-races in Narragansett Bay—a debate in which the Newport police force had beeen the worst losers. The fact that the patrolmen were at the time interfering in something that was strictly a nautical affair apparently had no influence on the mayor's opinions whatever; he had written a very scathing letter to the district commandant.

And then again there had been that affair of the baseball game at Guantanamo—only Guantanamo, being in Cuba, did not really count as a regular navy yard.

Still, all in all, there was sufficient burden on Riley's conscience to make him await the chaplain's return with distinct anxiety. And when that officer came puffing up the gangway the bosun was on hand to hear his first words.

"Well—I saw the commandant—" the

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chaplain was still panting from his climb—"and he said—he said——"

"That we could play it in the Torpedo School?" demanded Riley anxiously.

"No—he said he was afraid we'd tear up the place, and——"

"Then we can't have the game?" queried Riley, jumping dismally at conclusions.

"No—he said if we'd promise not to fight at the game, or any time that night, that maybe——"

"Oh, then we can play it after all!"

"Yes. But he said if we tore up things at all we'd have to come back and straighten every crooked brick and blade of grass in the place even!"

And the chaplain mopped his brow protestingly.

But the *Alaska's* bosun was more than satisfied.

"That's all right. We'll promise anything! We'll promise not to start a fight that whole day even, if he wants us to!" he declared exuberantly. "And if anything gets mussed up we'll promise to straighten it all out for him, too. But, jiminy! We just got to have that game!"

Just what effect it would have had on the bosun's joy to have overheard a conversation on the *Samoa's* quarterdeck later that afternoon, is a matter for speculation. It was Bosun Kerrigan who instigated the conversation. At the time he was explaining to the ship's bugler something about a mysterious little trip he had just taken through the Yard to Number One gate.

"—and when Riley turns his money over to Perkins to cover mine," he finished exultantly, "I couldn't hardly keep from laughing! Eighty-five hundred, at even money— Believe me, that's what I call easy pickings!"

At the emphatic assertion, the lieutenant who was standing the duty a short distance away on the quarterdeck looked up inquisitively.

"What's that?" he demanded, having caught only the last words. "What's that about 'easy pickings'?"

Bosun Kerrigan winked swiftly at the bugler.

"Nothing, sir—I was just telling Jackson here about a little game we're putting over on Riley of the *Alaska*. You see, he come over here this morning trying to get us into a basketball match with their team; made like he thought we was scared to play 'em, and all. Well, I let him run on for a while, and then I made like I was mad—so mad I didn't care what I did—and I took him up on the dare. They think they're going to beat us all to pieces, 'cause I let on we didn't have no team at all—" Kerrigan began to grin wickedly—"but you can just bet I wasn't getting took in that easy. I happen to know we got two kids in our radio gang that's been on high-school teams—and they've played this basketball game, before!"

The officer-of-the-deck listened to the narrative interestedly.

"Hm-m-m. High-school players, eh?" He frowned down at his spyglass thoughtfully: "And you're figuring on trimming that *Alaska* bunch right down to the boiler rivets, I suppose? All right, Kerrigan. Only I wouldn't put up any money on that game, if I was you. Not only is betting against the Navy Regulations, but up at the Y. M. C. A. yesterday I happened to see their team working out. And they've got 'Bullet' Smith playing 'forward' for them."

Kerrigan stared at the officer in surprize.

"Bullet Smith?" he repeated blankly. "Never heard tell of him. Who's Bullet Smith, sir?"

"Well," replied the lieutenant enlighteningly, "right now he's one of the *Alaska's* junior officers. But last year, on the Naval Academy team, he was the best forward in the East—two dozen high-school players couldn't stop him. That's why I'm advising you to keep your money off this game; if you just must gamble, you'll have better chances of winning on that crooked wheel down at Santiago."

But Kerrigan had ceased to listen. He was staring at the bugler in horrified enlightenment. After a second he let out a groan.

"Good ——!" he exclaimed in anguish. "I oughter known better! I oughter known better than to a-trusted that darn crook to tell the truth! And now it's too late! Gosh, it's too late——"

With a suspicious twitching at the corners of his mouth the lieutenant turned back toward the gangway, leaving Kerrigan and the bugler leaning limply against the lifelines.

After a period of dismal silence Kerrigan turned to his companion in disaster.

"Jackson," he instructed bitterly; "go down below and tell that basketball squad

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to get up here right away. They got eight hours practise a day to do, from now on!"

THAT the commandant was not intending to let promises take the place of precautions, in any sense of the word, was immediately apparent to observers on the night of the contest, from the very arrangement of the premises themselves. "No-man's land" could not have presented a better instance of segregated hostiles.

The portable stands for the rival factions were located on opposite sides of the playing court; barrier ropes further held the spectators apart, and as a last word four bluejacket sentries from the yard guard patrolled the lines with fixed bayonets. It was plain that on the ground floor, at least, hostilities could be inaugurated only at the expense of mutiny and bloodshed.

In the galleries that ran lengthwise of the building some twenty feet above the floor equal preparations were apparent. More ropes and sentries on the stairs barred the way to all adherents who might feel tempted to turn the linoleumed promenades into veritable "fighting tops." Only a single privileged observer was permitted in all the space aloft. Gunner's-mate Kelly, autocrat of the Torpedo School, had seized the place above the goals as an observation post, and was gazing down upon the arena with an air of vigilance that warned against any attempt at vandalism.

Well might Gunners'-mate Kelly have been jealous of his domain that night. It was the last word in neatness and care. Air compressors, gyroscopes, turbines, propellers—all the paraphernalia of the school—threw out the glint of polished metal from their cubby-holes along the walls. The assembled torpedoes in the galleries, with their slick oily bodies, were wicked with the aspect of readiness for either practise or war. Nor had the equipment for peacetime recreation been neglected.

The goal-backboards that depended from the galleries had been meticulously scrubbed, the metal of the baskets and brackets was gleaming with new paint, and the nets that hung down therefrom were as white as if they had never been used. The playing floor itself was glistening from much polishing and all the marking lines had been freshly drawn.

Wood, metal, paint—all the fixtures and furnishings—were as fresh and tidy-looking as if they had been constructed with this one occasion in view.

On two of the spectators, however, the gloss and glitter exerted no fascinations. Bosuns Riley and Kerrigan had detected in an inconspicuous corner a waiting sergeant of marines. To that corner they promptly turned their steps just as soon as they had seated their obstreperous companies in something resembling order.

Sergeant Perkins greeted them with a wink and a meaning tap on his blouse pocket.

"Yep, it's all here; just like you give it to me. And I'll be waiting to hand it over to the winner right after the game. Only remember what I said before—if there's any scraps or argument, the side that starts the scrap loses the bet right then and there!"

"Sure Mike!" accepted Riley, grinning. "That's all we want, anyway. Just give us a good referee and a fair game, and we'll play these guys to a standstill!"

"Oh, you will, will you?" snorted the *Samoa's* bosun sarcastically. "Well, you just wait—you're going to get a worse licking than you got in that football game last Fall, even. See if you don't!"

"That's right; wait till after the game," put in Perkins diplomatically. "And I'll be waiting to pay off the winner right here. Now let's beat it—here comes the referee—"

With a parting glare at each other Riley and Kerrigan scooted back to their places in front of their respective cohorts. In the center of the court the two team captains were receiving their last instructions. Then amid breathless expectancy the captains fell back. The teams took their stations. The referee held the ball aloft, poised between the two centers.

Peeereeeeep! shrieked the whistle.

The ball flew into the air. The struggle was on.

The incidents of that game were both comical and sad, or vice versa, depending upon the sympathies of the individual spectator. Seven out of the ten contestants playing their first regular game, demonstrated original ideas as regarded rules and etiquette. Had the referee been one of the sort who adheres to the statutes of the rule-book, regardless, the contest would never have been decided, by reason of suspension of most of the players. But early in the

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game that official had cannily concluded to balance foul for foul, in so far as it was possible, and thus permit the game to go on. For the first five minutes, even at that, there was almost less than no scoring at all. Complimentarily speaking, it was a contest of five against five; but in the actuality it was more nearly three against seven. What times Ensign "Bullet" Smith and the *Samoa's* two high school adepts did get their hands on the ball they were hindered and harassed by overmuch assistance from their aspiring team-mates.

And to add to the excitement of the ball being kicked and pommeled around the arena there was the constant uproar of exhortation and ridicule that rose from the rival stands. Jeers, hoots, and howls; passionate entreaties to "Come on, boy! Put it in!"; vindictive instructions to "Git that fellow! Git that big bum!"—in fact all the varied tumult and riot that marks the cheering of sailor against sailor was present in unmelodious quantities. And it can not be said that it contributed greatly to steadying the contestants' nerves, though there was abundant need of such steadying.

For instance, the first shot for goal that a *Samoan* made went wide of the target, landing at the gunner's-mate's feet, full twenty feet to the side. The *Samoan* had been hurried in his shot by the vision of two *Alaskans* bearing murderously down upon him, but that counted for nothing.

The resulting error in range and deflection brought a cruel roar of ridicule from the *Alaska* stands, to which the *Samoans* responded with defiant maledictions. But a second later the dishonors were evened, for an *Alaska* forward, forgetting in the excitement the nature of the immediate contest, tucked the ball under his arm as in past days on the gridiron, and had hurdled half the length of the court before the referee's whistle brought him scowling back.

It was a foul that could not be overlooked and the referee took official cognizance of it.

"Foul on the *Alaska* for running with the ball!" he announced tersely.

Immediately the *Samoa* rooters seized the opportunity for revenge. They stood up in their stands and whistled; they hailed the *Alaskans* as "Tow-Boaters! Hay-Seeds! Apple-Knockers!"; they begged pitifully to be informed why the *Alaska* forward didn't try a "drop-kick for a change? Or maybe a goal from placement?" And when their captain just managed to roll the foul shot over the rim for an initial score their delight knew no bounds. They shrieked and howled until the roof rattled, as the scorer chalked up on the blackboard a huge:

SAMOA, 1—ALASKA 0.

On the *Alaska* side the rooters shuffled their feet and muttered angrily.

But by now the seasoned ensign had begun to appreciate the situation. Dispensing with the very doubtful assistance of his team-mates he planned to play a lone hand game in the future. Snatching the ball almost out of a surprized *Samoan's* hands he dribbled it expertly down the court, dexterously avoided the *Samoan* guards, and poised himself for a quick shot at the basket.

So far, in accordance with the best sailor traditions, there had been no collective cheering from either side—nothing but individually conceived exhortation and abuse. But now as the *Alaskan* set himself for his attempt the *Samoa's* bosun, standing up in front of his shipmates, suddenly threw up his hands.

"Come on, fellows!" he yelled. "Now—all together——"

And from the *Samoa* stands there burst a loud peculiar yell. Or rather it was more an outburst of derision than a yell, for it had the same seething sound as a surf wave running along a curving beach and then crashing with a roar on a rock shelf at the end.

S-s-ss-shhhhh—it began, in hissing coincidence with the soar of the ball. *Shhh-a-a-awwwwww!*—it ended in a burst of derision as the ball rebounded crookedly from the backboard and missed the basket by a bare inch.

"——!" muttered Bosun Riley expressively, while the *Alaska's* rooters groaned in disappointment.

"Ya-ahh! Apple-Knockers! Apple-Knockers!" chorused the jubilant stands across the way.

It seemed a peculiarly unfortunate coincidence that the signal failure came at the same moment as the *Samoa's* new cheer. For thereafter, as if they had discovered in it some black magic, the *Samoan* cohorts adopted that yell, and used it whenever their goal was threatened. And whether from the nerve-shaking distraction of that sustained hiss or from the "losing psychology" that it began to exert, the *Alaska*

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goal-shooters began to hurry their efforts with an anxiety that precluded scores.

Even the redoubtable Smith, playing rings around his opponents, seemed to succumb to its evil influence, for his own numerous attempts at goal rolled out of the basket time after time, even when they had seemed to be already fairly inside the net. So that at the end of the first half the referee's whistle found the *Samoa* still leading by a score of 13 to 11, and the *Alaska* adherents whispering and muttering among themselves with glowering, suspicious glances at their hissing rivals.

"It's a jinx! That yell's a jinx!" declared the *Alaska's* sailmaker, a gray-haired veteran of forty years' service. "I've seen 'em like this before, I have. Ain't you noticed how the ball rolls out most every time they yells like that, a'most? That's 'cause it's a jinx. You watch what I'm tellin' you—we ain't goin' to beat 'em as long as they keeps on yellin' like that, neither. No, sir!"

And the aged veteran sat moodily back with a knowing expression that carried conviction to his hearers.

Even Ensign Smith whom the depressed bosun sought out with the hopes of obtaining reassurance, was morose on the subject. The basketball still lay in the middle of the floor, where it had been dropped by the referee. Picking it up, the ensign took a quick shot at the nearest basket.

Like a perfectly aimed mortar shell descending on its target, the ball came down on the basket and plunged through the hoop without even so much as touching the rim.

"See there?" demanded the ensign disgustedly. "Did you see that? Right through the hoop! But in the game I can't get one out of ten. And in practise yesterday I shot 24 out of 38 tries. What do you know about it!"

For answer the bosun picked up the ball, examined cover and seams closely, and then bounced it up and down on the floor for a moment.

"You're sure there ain't nothing funny about it anywhere, are you, sir?" he demanded. "I wouldn't put nothing beyond that bunch of crooks over there——"

And he cast a glowering look toward the *Samoan* stands.

The ensign laughed sarcastically.

"How could there be? Aren't we both using the same ball? And won't we be using the same basket next half that they used the last? No; it's that darn yell of theirs, I think; they've got us half-expecting to miss every time we shoot at the basket, already, doggone it! But maybe we'll get our shooting-eyes back, this next half."

Still glowering at the *Samoan* stands the bosun turned away.

"Well, we better get 'em back in a hurry, then," he grumbled pessimistically. "They're two points ahead of us to begin with, this half, you know."

But the ensign's hopes were doomed to a disappointment. Jinx, or psychology, or what not, the thing that was holding down the *Alaska's* scoring persisted in its evil work, even unto the very end. Instead of getting better, the *Alaska's* shooting-eyes, if anything, got worse. And the last derisive yell from the *Samoa* and the last unsuccessful goal-shot by the *Alaska*, coming together, found the *Samoa* team, outclassed though it had seemed on the floor, still leading by the margin of 25 to 21.

There was no fight after the game, that night, either. Having promised to rejoin their ships without indulging in personal conflict, both ship's companies knew that all further athletic relations and much future "liberty" depended upon the consideration they accorded that promise. Sad and disconsolate though they were, the *Alaskans* returned faithfully but ungraciously to their hammocks, promising themselves bloody reprisal in the near future.

Saddest of all, perhaps, was the crestfallen bosun. Eighty-five hundred dollars lost and the shock of a stratagem gone so inexplicably askew were heavy burdens upon his soul. Late that night he pondered the disaster. He was still brooding over it when the quartermaster turned him out half an hour before reveille the next day to initial the morning order book.

It turned out that there was a specific reason for the early awakening—an order calling for a working party of two hundred men to handle lines on the drydock that forenoon for the incoming *Maryland.* It was a duty that lay particularly within the bosun's ken, but he scarcely more than grasped the sense of the charge. His mind was still struggling with baskets and goals.

Suddenly he laid down the order book with an impious exclamation. Half a minute later he was alongside the bunk where lay his aide and abettor, Turret-Captain Brooks, still snoring sonorously.

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Roughly he shook that individual to consciousness.

"Wake up, you elephant!" he commanded impatiently. "Wake up—and tell me something! Wasn't there a gunner's-mate by the name of Kelly over on the *Samoa* back about a couple o' years or so?"

"Hrr-r-r—huh? What's that you said?" The turret-captain sat up and blinked groggily. "Oh, Kelly—— Yeah; he was transferred off'n the *Samoa* two years ago to the yard Torpedo School here. Why?"

"Uh-huh! Now I got it!"

What it was he had, the bosun neglected to state. He threw Turret-Captain Brooks's clothes brutally at him.

"Git into them," he ordered, "in one big hurry! Me and you're goin' to take a little squint at something up in the yard before the yard force has time to stir it around. Here—where's that flashlight o' yours?"

TWENTY minutes later, persistently ignoring the irate queries which the turret-captain persisted in making, the bosun led the way through a latch-forced window into the yard Torpedo School building.

The interior of the rambling structure was still shrouded in the gray of early dawn which drifted feebly through a few unshuttered windows high up in the wall. From the darkness of the corners the polished machinery glistened to the flashlight rays like metal skeletons of grotesque beasts. But straight to the stairs the bosun led the way, and over the ropes, and down the stretch of one of the galleries. A couple of slim torpedo shapes gleamed ghostly in the feeble light, but the bosun passed them by with scarcely a glance. At last he halted, just over the bracket-bolts that marked the position of the pendant backboard with its basket, below.

Turret-Captain Brooks, who had now subsided into a state of sullen silence, looked cynically on at the bosun's maneuvers. And these were unusual, to say the least.

First he bent over the gallery railing, and, flashing the light slowly around, inspected the innocent-looking basket closely. Then he gave the backboard and brackets an equally searching examination. Finally he crawled on hands and knees a good twenty feet along the gallery, keeping the light focused on the linoleum border and feeling occasional bumps with his thumb and fingers.

When in this manner he had almost reached the nearest torpedo he suddenly halted and flashed the light up one of the gallery stanchions. For a second he examined the rail and stanchion closely. Then he sat suddenly back on his heels with a short shrill whistle.

Turret-Captain Brooks, who had been following these maneuvers in surly silence, now sneered cynically.

"All right; what you found now?" he demanded sarcastically. "Some new way to trim those suckers on the *Samoa*, huh? Another one o' those slick schemes like we worked on 'em last night—huh?"

Bosun Riley ignored the withering sarcasm in the other's voice.

"What've I found?" he repeated slowly. "Oh, nothin' much—except the reason why they beat our team last night. Just like I might 'a' known; it wasn't their playin' that beat us, dog-gone it—it was that —— Kelly standin' up here in the gallery above our goal!"

Turret-Captain Brooks voiced his utter disbelief.

"Beat us by standin' up here in the gallery last night? Kelly did? Say, what d'yer think I am—a rookie marine?"

"All right," challenged Riley umbrageously; "if you think I'm kiddin' you, you go lean over that goal-basket for a minute. And you'll see——"

Sneeringly skeptical, Brooks went and did as directed. He clutched the rail and leaned far over so as to get the clearest possible view of the basket, vague and shadowy in the somberness below.

"All ready?" demanded Riley, down the rail.

"Yep," responded the turret-captain, fixing his eyes on the basket beneath.

"Then here comes——"

With a sudden rush and whiz something cold and uncanny swept out of the shadows below, tore Turret-Captain Brooks's cap from his head, lifted each individual hair of his scalp up on end, and made him shut his eyes in one spasmodic blink. When he opened them again the thing, whatever it was, had passed—vanished—leaving not so much as a single trace behind. Only the empty gloom mocked his questioning stare.

Suddenly Turret-Captain Brooks swore comprehendingly.

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"Well, I'll be ——! Compressed air!"

"Right-o," acknowledged Riley, coming up in the rear. "Two thousand pounds a square inch of it, shooting out of that torpedo air-flask back there. Long as you press that valve on that stanchion there you couldn't drive a ball through this basket with a hundred-ton pile-driver even!"

Turret-Captain Brooks opened his mouth as suddenly as he had closed his eyes a moment before.

"An'—an' that's what kep' us from gettin' the ball in, so many times, last night?"

"That's what done it! Little compressed air pipe around the basket rim, painted over so you couldn't notice it—'nother little pipe under the linoleum to that torpedo back there—a little push-valve on the stanchion: and that's all there was to it. Every time we shot at this basket and they didn't want it to go in, Kelly pushes the valve there and the air keeps the ball out. When we changed to the other basket Kelly went over and worked another little arrangement over there just like this one, I reckon."

"Yeah—but look here—" demanded the turret-captain suddenly. "How come we didn't hear that air *zizzin'* last night, then? We could 'a' heard it just now a quarter mile or more!"

Bosun Riley grunted peevishly.

"You remember that fool yell of theirs they let out every time we shot for a goal—the yell we said was a jinx? Well, it was, all right; it was the jinx that kept us from hearing this arrangement working up here! 'Course they had to let us make a goal now and then to keep us from gettin' suspicious; but you notice they never let us get ahead of them any, didn't you?"

For a second the turret-captain stood in silence as if weighing the evidence closely. Then from his throat burst something halfway between an oath and a gasp.

"Why, the —— crooks!" he exploded. "Cheatin' us out of our money like that! Why, it wasn't nothing but a straight-out skin game! We can't stand for that. Come on here—let's go 'tend to 'em!"

The bosun had to throw out a quick arm to hold him back.

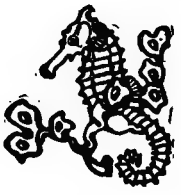
"You durn fool! They've had that money eight hours—do you think they'd give it back now? What do you want to do?—go over there by yourself and get your fool head beat off you?"

"But, holy Moses! You ain't goin' to stand around and let 'em get away with this, cold, are you?" howled the turret-captain rabidly. "We can at least bust one or two of 'em in the face, can't we? If we don't do something they'll crow over this till baseball season. You ain't willin' to stand for that, are you?"

" 'Course not. But how's gettin' your head beat off goin' to help you any?" demanded the bosun sarcastically. "Why don't you use it for something else, like thinking, for instance? Now listen to this. The morning orders calls for us to send a couple hundred men over to dock the *Maryland* around eight o'clock, don't they? Well—" and the *Alaska's* bosun faced his companion with a most evil grin—"what's to prevent us accidentally runnin' into that hundred and fifty work party off the *Samoa* that passes by the radio shack up there about that time every mornin'? Huh?"

SOMETHING about 8:30 A. M. it was that the corporal of the guard in the guard-house near the administration building was startled by the guard-house door flying violently open. But it was a good minute later before he recognized in the muddy apparition that stood before him the immaculate sentry he had posted a short half-hour before at Number Five Post, near the radio building. And only then did recognition come with the quivering words that the apparition croaked:

"H-h-hey! For the love of mud—call out the guard! Git up the barricks! An' git the police, too—quick! The *Alaska* crew's over near the radio shack beatin' —— outer that *Samoa* bunch!"



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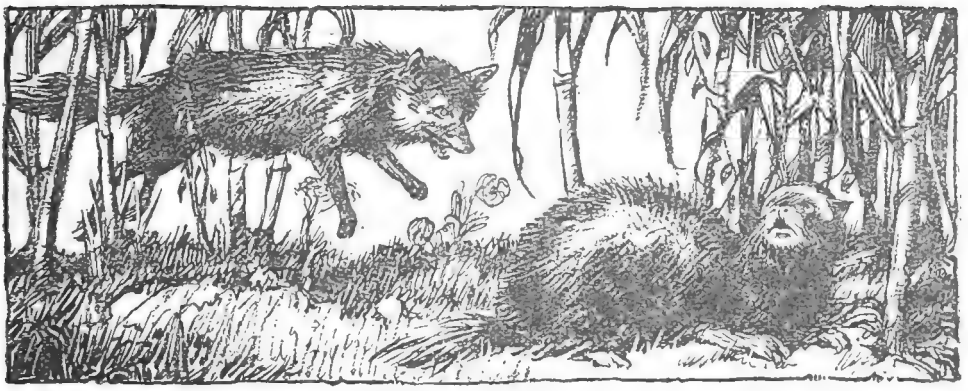

THE MYSTIC

BY F·ST·MARS

Author of "Fire Brat Occasions," "None But the Brave," etc.

"I hear a voice you can not hear,
Which says I must not stay,
I see a hand you can not see,
Which beckons me away."

—TICKELL.

SOMETHING red and undulating, more red and more undulating than the wave and play of the tawny wheat-ears, moved among the ripening harvest. Hard to tell what it was. Hard, indeed, to guess. Yet it was the last thing one would have expected.

Suddenly, for one brief, silent instant, a grinning mask was thrust out. There was the flash of a half-insolently lolling red tongue, a gleam like the glint of green tin, as the drooping sun caught the cunning eyes, and the mask was thrust back again. Even a child would have recognized it as the head of a fox—to be precise, a vixen.

Apparently she had gone. Really she was there, watching behind the stems, a silent, half-bent, spare little, neat little, lithe shadow, half-resentful, half-resigned over the big cubs who had prevailed upon her riskily to hunt thus early, before "the hour of pride and power, of talon, and tusk, and claw."

Nor had she so far glimpsed anything worth hunting. Her quick, intelligent, yellow dog's eyes marked the trailing flock of pied wagtails looping by, beheld the silver-voiced linnets scattering thistle-down, and saw where the yellow-hammers covered the pink-blossomed brier stems like wild canaries. But none of these things appealed to her as worth a stalk.

For a moment she thought of chancing a long-range leap at a golden-green greenfinch balancing upon a wildly swaying wheat-sheath; for another of springing at the blue-black and white swallows glancing like flung darts to and fro, with swishing wings, above the swishing wheat; but what were they? A mouthful, not enough for one cub.

Then suddenly she jumped to attention.

Upon the languid, sensuous afternoon of silence a sound had cut—rather sawed than cut perhaps—a steady, monotonous, "Crek-crek-crek-crek-crek," harsh, regular, and uninterrupted. It might have been some harvester sharpening a scythe with a whetstone. It might have been a fishing-rod reel. A novice could have mistaken it for either of these things, but not the vixen. Mistakes are infrequent in the wild, and most of them are unhealthy.

The sound came from some fields near by, half-a-mile away; so far it carried in the stillness; but the vixen made no blunder. It was a meal, the voice of a meal waiting to be caught. Good, she would go catch it.

Now nobody saw the vixen traverse that half-mile of daylight, or even suspected that she was abroad at all. It is a way vixens have, even when hunted and flying from the hounds. She was a swish in the waving wheat that might be anything or nothing. She was a shadow among the cool shadows at the bottom of the hedge. She was a waving of white convolvulus trumpets in the ditch. She was a bending of the pointing

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blood-splashed poppies. She was the unknown that had blown into the gilded air from a winking cloud of tortoise-shell and peacock butterflies from the green velvet nettle-bed. She was the mystery that set the rocks suddenly into a babble of abuse over the carpet of purple flecked with white that was a bed of fritillaries. She was the fear back of the suddenly switched-on alarm bugle of a sentinel blackbird.

All these things she was, but neither you nor I could have seen her. So far as we are concerned, if you or I had been in that place, we would never have known she was there. And that's why the wild seems so uninteresting to some people; they forget that for every creature they see and watch, a dozen have seen and are watching them.

Thus then, by ways that were devious and means that were obscure, the vixen arrived finally, after a certain time—time is not very much more important in the wild than in the East—at the fields where the peculiar grating, insistent cry came from.

But which field?

She had some slight difficulty in working that out, but finally pinned it to a big wheat-field beside some water-meadows.

Very good! Now, which part of the field?

And there she was done. There you, or I, would have been doubly done. The steady, unspeakably monotonous, "Crek-crek-crek-crek!" kept on like the click of breathing in a wheezy throat, but for the life of one, one could not tell where it came from.

It was here under the crab-apple. No, it was over there among the blood-drenched poppy patch. No, it was yonder where the corn-flowers reflected the sky. And again, it was not, but by that corner where the wood pigeons were dropping down one by one, as if they were diving into golden water—to feed upon weed-seeds, if it please you, not corn—and vanishing from sight.

It was everywhere, and nowhere for certain. It was, without a doubt, ventriloquial, and no one could say where it was.

But Madam Vixen had another card up her tight-fitting black silk sleeve—her nose, her sharp, inquisitive, hyper-sensitive nose. Scent can not be ventriloquial, anyway. She trailed.

That vixen had a grand time trailing. She drew several very fine, intricate, and complete mazes in the high golden wheat, where, after the first dozen strides, she could not see a yard on either hand, and did not know, from whiskers, whether she was facing north, east, west, or south.

Moreover, during that time she must have covered quite a good distance, and—seen nothing at all, except wheat and sky. And she stopped in the end, because, apparently, so far as she could see, she might go on doing the same thing all the evening and half the night, without ever getting any farther.

Also, she had come to the conclusion that she had been trailing not one creature, but half a dozen, each engaged upon the delightful game of weaving mazes upon its own hook. In other words, the vixen was shrewdly beginning to suspect that she had been made a fool of, and no animal likes that; it hurts their dignity, and wastes good hunting energy.

SHE stopped and listened, but she could hear nothing but the eternal soft swish of the wheat, bending to the caress of the breeze. The strange cry had ceased almost directly she had started trailing. Nothing moved within her ken except the tossing wheat-ears, one wheat-ear flying low, and the white and filmy clouds, flying high over a sky of deepest blue.

She lifted a soft, narrow upper-lip in an impatient snarl—but I guess it was her way of swearing—and, with a whisk of her brush, departed. Evidently this meal was not to be obtained on sight, or by trailing, but by ambuscade and surprize, and who in coverts was going to tell where one ought to lie up in ambush in all those mazy mazes?

Then there came and stood just in the bare place, filled to the brim with sun, which had been cleared among the wheat by the jackdaws, just where the vixen had stood when she snarled—a bird. At least, it wasn't a rat, though it could have easily been mistaken for one, sneaking along the ground, at first glance.

At second glance, it might have been mistaken for a small pullet—it had the absurd, gawky, high leg action of some pullets. At third glance, one would have made no mistake about its being a darn mysterious bird, having appeared all of a sudden from nowhere without a sound, and on its legs, not its wings, and standing now motionless, staring after the vixen, like some brown gnome or elfin spirit of the wheat, endowed with the gift of invisibility at will, which had been playing pranks upon the excitable and sweating vixen.

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Then, suddenly, it spoke, with its head out, and in a fowl-like, harsh manner—

"Crek-crek-crek-crek!"

Instantly, five other shadow birds, like as peas to the first, evolved themselves—oh—out of thin air, for all one could tell to the contrary, or see them come from.

They were corn-crakes, which are landrails, which are voices among the hay and the wheat and the clover in Summertime, and jolly monotonous voices at that, so far as ninety-nine men out of a hundred ever see of them.

They affected a pleasing and artistic and marvelously fine and intricate combination of dusky brown, reddish-ash, ash, rust-red, reddish brown, and rusty white as to their livery, and a pullet-like aspect, as has been said, in their make-up, but there their "ordinariness" stopped. In all the rest they were by no means ordinary.

The little gathering of mystery represented the old cock landrail, his four children, and mate; and the vixen had given herself the pleasure and healthy exercise of following him, and them, in and out, singly and together, through the cool wheat mazes, for the best part of the last half-hour. It had not bothered them.

They had only run, and crept, and they were always running and creeping—had always run and crept like that since the very hour they were hatched. It was their little way, for which they had a peculiar genius, and in which they specialized. If the vixen had kept them running and creeping like that for half a day, in place of half an hour, I doubt if it would have troubled them much, and I am certain it would have brought the vixen not one inch nearer seeing what she was trailing. Aye, they were a queer family.

And then, suddenly, they were not a family at all. They were nothing—nothing that one could see, at any rate. There had been no movement, no burst of whirring wings, no telltale rustling race of confusion into the wheat—nothing again. Only—well, only they were not there. That's all.

They had dissolved, apparently, into vapor, all at once, all together, and at will; sunk into the bowels of the earth, or something, and were no more. It was rather an uncanny proceeding. Even in Nature, which is given to vesting the perfectly obvious and ordinary with a cloud of mystery, it was most extraordinary.

Then the polecat came racing up. You know the polecat? He is the father of all the ferrets, and one of Nature's official executioners.

He stopped dead in the sun-bathed clearing, and stared around; his flat head up on his long neck, his body close to earth—which it could not well be otherwise, since his legs were little more than stumpy abbreviations.

To use an expression of the laity, the polecat's face did not suit him very well, and one could not like his eyes, but there was no denying he seemed to be well designed for his job, which was slaying. He stared, and he stared, and he stared—he had a peculiarly interested and insolent stare, by the way—and he saw nothing. One could have sworn, indeed, that there was nothing there to see.

I used to believe, when I first began the foolish task of spying upon Nature, that seeing was believing, but I have become more skeptical since. The polecat, however, that evil-smelling "foumart," as the natives called him, knew better than I, for after about a minute's careful optical search, he stuck his pointed nose down, and started in upon a nasal one.

Apparently he refused pointblank to believe his own eyes, or it may have been that his experience—checkered and bitter, you may be sure, with that face—had made him skeptical too. Anyway, he smelled. I mean he sniffed. Everybody knows that he smelled himself, and not nicely.

And here the vixen returned. I suppose that, like many who are not vixens, she could not get over being "had." It stuck in her sleek throat, and she was after getting her own back, or else she had found out that scalp-hunting in daylight had little profit.

Anyhow, she returned, on the ambuscade principle, which, as we have discussed, appeared to be the best plan of warfare to best friend landrail, or, if you like, corncrake. To be precise, she came with a spring and a pounce, without any announcement to herald her approach and prepare her reception. Her game was to surprize—to startle the landrails into a rustle, or a jump, or something that might give them away.

And the surprize part worked all right, only it was she who got it, and not the landrail, or rails. In fact, she very nearly pounced upon the polecat, and in case some may miss the point of this, let me mention

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for the benefit of the uninitiated, that there are very, very few creatures in the wild who would willingly land upon a polecat—putting their foot into a steel trap would be cheaper and less smelly.

So far as the vixen was concerned, she might have landed upon a spring-board, by the way she went up into the air again—she was so surprized—instantly and straight. And she had no time to say anything at all.

So far as the polecat was concerned, he didn't say anything; he did not wait to speak, in fact. He bit, which, as some of you may have discovered, is a way polecats, and their tame ferret descendants, have. They are a hard fighting breed of a few words——

Then the vixen spoke—she snarled. Also she bit, hard, brutally, and downward, being in the air at the time. And before the pair of them knew quite what they were at, and why, they had "bluffed" themselves into a very pretty little scrap.

It did not last long, that fight. Both combatants quickly gained a high respect for each other, and lost some fur and a little blood. Also they found that they were fighting for nothing, or rather, that they were fighting for a meal that wasn't there, or did not seem to be there, and they dared not look for it because they were together.

Wherefore, they parted, and departed slowly, backward, or "three-quarter face," as the photographers say, and using language derogatory of the peace, and, moreover, they really departed this time, having no special desire to risk recommencing that fight.

And the amber sun continued to fill the little clearing; and bits of amber fluff, which were flies, continued to float across it; and pale lilac and paler sulfur butterflies continued to say: "Slick! Slick!" down among the scarlet pimpernels and the creeping weeds; and the shadows of the swallows continued to cross and recross all the time.

And then—oh!—and then the old cock landrail first, and his family after, invited themselves visible again; or, in other words, stood up! They had been there all the time, crouched, motionless, bits of their surroundings, parts of the scene, "frozen," they call it in the wild, and because "frozen," plus the color-scheme of their uniforms, they had been invisible even a pace or two away.

And they knew it, betted their lives upon it, and—won. They were full of dainty tricks, had any amount of trumps hidden up their sleeves, these birds whom everybody knew by sound, but nobody, hardly, by sight.

For about two minutes the old cock remained still as a bird stuffed in a glass cage, on one leg, head sunk between shoulders. He looked rather like a quail on stilts—"king of the quails" was one of his subtitles—or a little long-legged partridge, very thin. Then he began to feed, which was a signal for the rest, save the mate, who kept "cave," to dine also, picking insects off the stems, daintily tweaking them from the leaves, and scratching up an ants' nest backward, like a fowl.

And then again began that steady "crek-crek-crek!" which came from several places at once. It was late for him to call after that fashion, but he was using it to guide the family, which half his time he could not see, though all the other landrails—two pair to the square mile—had become silent, and in doing so had ceased to exist, so far as human knowledge of them was concerned, some time ago.

"Crek-crek-crek-crek-crek-crek!"

It was a maddening and machine-like, monotonous sound, ruled off without a stop, without a hitch, without expression, and without variation, ceaselessly, from anywhere and everywhere, and goodness knows where, as the family began to spread and run about in feeding.

Also, it was a most confusing sound, for you absolutely could not tell where it came from, except that you could be quite sure that it would be where you were not, and that it would recede, will-o'-the-wisp fashion, Heaven alone knew in what direction, always as you approached it.

And that was another of the landrail's trump cards, as the old black poaching cat with a bell on—with a bell on!—found out when he essayed to elucidate that mystery. You should have seen the look upon that gentleman feline's face when, fifteen minutes later, he came away. Cats are without humor, and can never see a joke.

This one showed all that one reads in the faces of superior dames who enter a smoking compartment by mistake, and will not budge, though half suffocated.

THE day died down into silence, and the birds began to go by in companies to bed. The shadows grew, and the mists crept out of them over the tangle of dying Summer, and the sun

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flared and smoldered to redness in the west. A green plover, which is a lapwing in some places, began calling wildly, thin and complainingly, and the butterflies, folding their wings thin as knife-blades, hung themselves upside-down upon the grass-stems.

Suddenly a blackbird sang out the alarm, in a holly thicket, and a covey of partridges burst, like a six-inch shell, upward and away over the hedge. And next moment the vixen, with all her cubs, was rustling and racing through the wheat.

It was a near thing. The little red mother had produced the element of surprize in her attack with a vengeance. Before you could wink the bending wheat-ears were marking the course of half a dozen foxes racing through the wheat like greyhounds. They were everywhere, and the little old vixen looked to capture the whole corn-crake family at one stroke.

How on earth the old cock corn-crake and hen managed to get their well-grown young ones out of sight is unknown. No one knows, either, whether they marvelously "froze" and let the beating foxes overrun them, or whether they bolted for it, leaving a trail of interminable tangles in all directions. But I do know that the cock corn-crake, who had waited himself to see all safe, and to aid the retreat by personally drawing half the chase to himeslf, waited too long, so that at last, when right out in the middle of the field, he could not well ignore the surreptitious rustlings of cunning foxes, who guessed within a few yards where he was, and, having surrounded, were drawing in all around him.

He stopped dead, and stood still and erect, with head up, eyes and ears hard at work—a slim, neat brown form, less than a foot long, down among the wheat.

Then, even as the wheat-stalks swayed to the pressure of red and furry bodies on two sides, he crouched, and, with head out, bolted for the third side, stepping high and running with wonderful speed. But what wonder in that speed was there to a fox?

The glinting eyes, red streak of tongue, and wide-pricked ears of the vixen thrust out a little behind him and on one side, she saw, and gave a little terrier-like noise, half-whine, half-yelp of excitement. She leaped forward, even as the yelp brought out a cub's sharp head on the other side, and he sprang forward too.

The racing landrail doubled suddenly, as a third fox blundered out dead ahead, and dodged again before the ringing snap—but it fell short—of the jaws of a fourth. In a flash he was shut in, with gleaming fangs all around him. In another he would be dead.

The vixen sprang in to complete the kill, and, as the clash of her teeth and the sudden whir of strenuous, straining wings coincided, closed her fangs upon—air! She leaped high and wrigglingly upward, forcing every inch of "lift" out of herself that she was capable of, almost squeaking, and snapping again and again, very savagely.

The cubs sprang upward, too, colliding with each other and their mother, biting madly, and falling back in a tumbling heap. But it was all no good. The cunning old cock corn-crake, or landrail, had slipped literally through their teeth—the vixen and one cub each held one plucked feather sidewise in their mouths, like a cigaret, to prove it—and as they raced, and sprang, and snapped at him just out of reach, flapping along with trailing legs, they knew, I think, that they had again been "had."

Ever since the landrail had arrived first from Africa in May, and appeared, or rather announced himself, among the water meadows set aside for hay, the vixen had been trying to capture the owner of that lost and wandering voice, and every time he had beaten her, never allowing her even to catch sight of him, and never once using his wings—though often hard pressed—till at last she had come to feel certain that he could not fly.

His flight now was, therefore, maddening.

But she waited, that little red vixen. She, too, had a trump card up her sleeve—the self-binding reaping machine, and time. She, moreover, being a wild thing, could wait, and, being a fox, never forgot.

She waited, therefore, that little red vixen, and time came and went, and with it the "self-binder," and with the "self-binder" the wheat in cascades of gold, and with the wheat what was most important—cover.

The monotonous, machine-like "crek-crek" of the hidden old cock corn-crake had stopped before the wheat was cut, but the little vixen knew, because her nose told her, that the bird and his family were still there. Then, on the night after the wheat had been carried—all the wheat—she took her well-grown cubs, and she hunted that stubble

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field, and the fields adjoining, and the hedges and ditches surrounding them, and—drew blank!

The corn-crakes were gone with the wheat—who could say where?

THE woods had kindled, by way of orange and scarlet, to crimson and deep and deeper purple; the last robin had practised over his melancholy song in Winter carol in the wind-whipped hawthorn; and the green plover had spread, wailing eerily, over the sodden, gleaming fields, when the vixen came out to stare at an enormous yellow moon perched above the tree-tops.

She was not pleased with the world in general, not pleased at all. Hounds had been bustling and scattering her nearly grown cubs about the countryside all day, and now that two of them had returned, tired and hungry, asking that she should lead them to a "kill," she could only reply, in dumb show, that no self-respecting rabbit would show his cleft nose out in that wet, and that the pheasants had gone to roost early. Two courses alone suggested themselves—to try the "roots" for partridges and hares, or descend to hunting water-rats by the river. She chose the former, and led the way to the mangel-wurzel and the swede field.

The foliage of the "roots" was horribly wet, and the vixen, soon drenched to the skin, snarled at her cubs about every third stride, none too pleased that they should bother her even for advice and leadership, at their time of life. The procession, therefore, that moved out from the hedge in the treacherous moonlight was scarcely happy, and none too likely to surprize anything by stealthy approach.

They found nothing, sniff and snuff as they would, and were just about to give it up, and part company before they finished up with a free fight, when a little wandering eddy of wind fetched the old vixen round as if she had been tapped on the back.

For a long half-minute she remained fixed and rigid—head, back, and tail in one straight line, one fore-foot uplifted. Then she clapped down to earth, belly flat, and began to wriggle forward, stealthily, almost, as a cat. She was smelling corn-crake. And inwardly, I fancy, she was ready to bite herself, so to speak, for not thinking to look for him among the roots ever since the wheat was cut. Anyway, now she must make no mistake. This time there must not be any blunder. It was her chance to get her own back, and, for all she knew, it might be her last.

The vixen took her time. If patience would do the trick, she ought to win. Probably she covered about twenty yards in nearly that number of minutes, and then, on a sudden, she started, quivered from head to foot, and was still as a stone.

A dark form, like a slim, small pullet, was running along the row between the swede-tops, with a strange, high, angular, fowl-like action, close in front of her. So close it was that, even in the half-light of the moon, she could not mistake it—the old cock-corn-crake!

There followed one brief, aching, silent pause of tense, nerve-strained seconds, during which the vixen had just time to see that another high-stepping bird form was running in front of the corn-crake, which form was the hen. Then, as a stone leaves a catapult, with incredible swiftness, with extraordinary suddenness, the little vixen hurled herself forward, open-jawed, and——

No mere human being can rightly account for what followed because we can not tell what the wild folk see and what they do not, or when. All we may know is that, in that same fraction of a second, the hen spun about, and, stopping dead, would have collided with her husband, if both birds had not literally leaped straight up into the air with madly beating wings, and left—and left the vixen and the polecat to dash headlong into each other from opposite directions, and at top speed.

Apparently, they had both been stalking the same quarry, or rather, one had been stalking the hen from one side, the other the cock from the other side, and—well, there they were.

The old corn-crake did not, however, wait to watch that fight; the sounds of it were enough for him. He could hear them as he rose steadily on a long slant, whirring, faster and faster, right across the field, and, to judge by what he heard, an armed neutrality of years was dissolving amid murder. Each animal, probably, blamed the other for receiving on its own person the savage bite meant for corn-crake.

Now, so far as the evidence of all the wild folk goes, it would seem almost as if neither corn-crake had flown much more than a

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hundred yards at a time for half a year; yet now these mysterious and unaccountable birds chose to fly on, and on, and on, rising all the time upon a long, long slant, up, up, over field, over wood, over river, one hundred, four, seven hundred feet up, a thousand, thousands of feet up, still going, whirring steadily and strongly faster, and faster, and faster, higher, and higher, and higher, bang into the laughing face of the moon, going always due south, till at last they dwindled from fantom black silhouettes to fly shapes, from fly shapes to flea forms, from flea forms to specks dancing on the eye-ball—away, away, in the immensities of the heavens, and from floating specks to—nothing.

The corn-crakes were gone—back to Africa, and Allah knoweth what befel them thereafter!

SONG OF THE SEA

***by* Bill Adams**

SAILS an' gales, an' the sea's far trails,
Strange songs o' sailormen,
Belayin'-pins an' ropes an' things,
Queer songs o' sailormen.
Long twilights on the hatches,
A squeaky fiddle's tune;
Seamen singin', roarin' snatches,
Old songs beneath the moon.

Queer old tunes o' suns and moons,
Strange shouts o' sailormen,
Oaths an' cries, odd melodies,
Queer songs o' sailormen;
Smoky half-decks at the gloamin',
Songs out o' long ago,
Sailors dancin', goin' roamin',
Roarin', "Blow, boys, blow!"

Topplin' seas an' canvas groanin',
Still songs o' sailormen,
Decks awash an' some one moanin',
(Keep a-singin', sailormen!)
Shake her, shake her, keep her movin'!
Sailor's fiddles play,
"We'll go no more a-rovin'!"
(Not till another day.)

Rearin' gale an' canvas streamin',
Still songs o' sailormen,
Overboard? Aye! Some one screamin',
(Sing, for God's sake, sailormen!)
There's a shipmate used to cheer us
To the fiddle's tune;
Rouse a chantey, so he'll hear us,
Drownin' 'neath the moon.

Lots of wrecks on Ramirez;
Still sing those sailormen!
Black roll the Cape Horn seas;
(Poor singin' sailormen!)
Women waitin' by the landin',
Far ports an' wide . . . .
Better sing an' ease your standin',
Watchin' by the tide.

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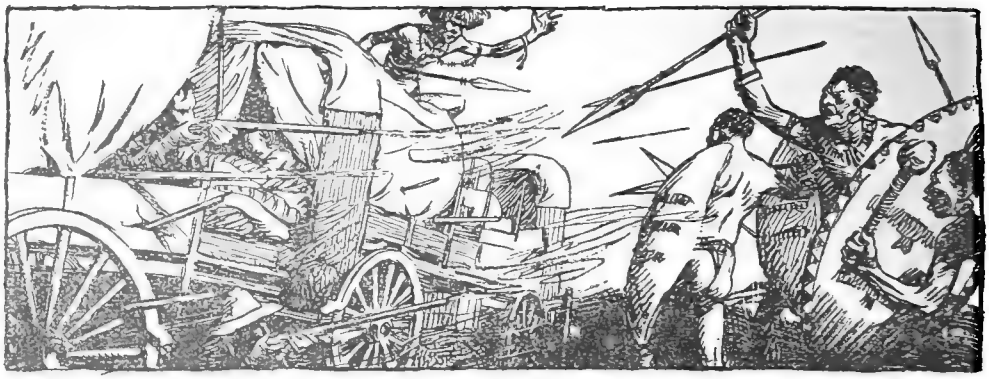

UMLIMO, *LOBENGUELLA'S* WITCH-DOCTOR

by SANTIE SABALALA

Author of "The Crocodile's Bride," "Kos, the Witch-Doctor," etc.

THE craft of witch-doctor falls into two lines. The one is where one serves an apprenticeship and the other where he chooses to be a witch-doctor. The latter is in vogue among the less powerful tribes, whereas the powerful and militant ones have a form of apprenticeship that an applicant has to serve in before he becomes an *iqra*. This apprenticing is devoted to a single family. Therefore it could be easily said that the instincts of a witch-doctor are bred in the child.

In civilization there is a certain insistent question as to why the native is so easily influenced by the witch-doctor, and why the witch-doctor has such a power over the people's minds.

In the first place the native pure and simple is in a state of "receptiveness" as far as his mind is concerned, and is always ready to believe in anything against himself. Everything is negative. Life is placed on the basis of always appeasing something—the evil spirits (*vukaloshe*).

When everything is harmonious the evil spirits are content; but when a great disaster overtakes the tribe or kraal—an epidemic of sickness either of man or beast—the evil spirits are angry with the people, and a sacrifice is meditated.

It is here that the witch-doctor is called in. He is full of confidence in his uncanny powers, and the people are ready to accept any remedy that he may order. In a case where the cattle may be dying in droves—possibly from sweet grass—he may order a large pit to be dug and a few hundred heads of cattle be driven in there and buried alive, "in order that they may grow up again when the evil spirits have had time to milk and eat some of them."

In the course of a few short weeks the sweet grass dries up, the cattle get over their colic, and every one rejoices for the witch-doctor has been able to appease the evil spirits by his wonderful magic.

THE name Umlimo means "the gardener" or "planter." Its Zulu signification means "the first-born." Umlimo's father's witch name was Ututu, meaning ashes. He had come by this cognomen because in his *fu*-bag—which a witch-doctor always carries with him wherever he goes—he had ashes, and always dropped some of them near anybody that he happened to disapprove of.

The person thus warned would in fear and trembling hasten to the witch-doctor's abode and ask what he should do in order to avert Ututu's anger, and suitable arrangement would be made if he was not in the way politically or otherwise.

If he was in the way and possibly in a powerful position that made any violence risky, a tribute in the shape of a sum of cattle would be demanded, and the warning given not to allow any one under any circumstances to look at him *ama langageni*

"Umlimo, Lobenguella's Witch-Doctor," copyright, 1922, by Santie Sabalala.

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(with hands shading the eyes whilst looking at him) for whoever did so desired his death.

The victim would leave already doomed; for, as has been remarked, the native mind is receptive. The man fears the worst and hopes for the best.

He goes back to his hut, eats his evening meal and goes to sleep. On awakening the next day his first thought is what kind of a day it is. He sees the sun shining brightly through the door. The women in the kraal get up and go about their duties whilst he sits brooding by the fireplace in the center, cursing the sun for its brightness.

A council is called of all the older men, and he has to attend. He delays a little while and then gets up and goes to the *umkonzo*, where the men are seated on the ground in a circle. He comes up with the sun at his back. His heart misses several beats as on gaining the circle he sees his closest friend looking at him with a smile on his face with a hand shaded over his eyes. His face does not betray his feelings as he haunches down, for his inbred stoicism is part of him; yet he is terror-struck.

He longs to go and consult the witch-doctor. The *konzo*, as usual, drags on till sundown, when at the end of it the doomed man hastens to the witch-doctor's dwelling without eating his evening meal. Arrived there, he states what has taken place. The witch-doctor informs him that he must go out on the morrow and get a certain kind of herb, and under no circumstances to come back until he has found that certain herb.

On the morrow the "spelled" man sets out in quest of the herb that will "throw" the spell from him. Five or six days and nights pass, and the spelled man does not return. A moon passes, and still the spelled man has not returned. The witch-doctor gives it out that the *isi gebengas* (forest goblins) or giants have got him, whereas said giants may have been a band of lions, a crouching leopard in the long grass, or a hungry cheetah who has done away with the spelled man on the quest of a herb that may or may not have been existent.

As for his so-called mind transference, the witch-doctor cultivates himself or his mind so that he may catch anything that drifts therein. The name of a certain induna (chief) drifts through his mind. The witch-doctor immediately runs over in his mind just what hold he has on that induna. Perhaps a certain amount of heads of cattle that were to have been a payment for a sickness of one of his family that the witch-doctor has cured—a snake-bite or the sting of a tarantula, which latter is no small feat from a medical-cure standpoint.

The witch-doctor muses on this and decides that the induna will be seen by him. And it comes to pass that the induna is seen. Accidental it may be, without any immediate intention to pay the score owing to the witch-doctor; the point being that the witch-doctor's intuitions are vindicated.

The witch-doctor's intuitions are very keen; possibly this may be strengthened because they are able to judge their own tribesmen. And then there are different makeups of character with the constant human repetition. That is the weakness of humanity as the witch-doctor sees it.

The witch-doctor's ability to read minds is very simply done. He contorts his face into different expressions. Each grimace has its own explanations. The native is a born actor, and the witch-doctor surpasses them all, for he holds a position of great prestige, and consequently cultivates every twist and turn that may mean any kind of an advantage to him.

His belief in himself is his main hold on the people. The fabrications of his mind once repeated become facts, so far as practise is concerned. The fantastic idea of riding baboons has its being in the effect that it has on the kraal. An unseen yet heard baboon, grunting and groaning on a pitch-dark night, laboring along with the witch-doctor on its back, chanting in his moaning way in unison with his simian steed, is something very unnatural and weird to hear.

Witch-doctors have different animals among different tribes that they prefer to prowl about on, the *Amazulu* doctor preferring an ox; the *Umpondo*, a big Kafir goat. The "opposition" to a witch-doctor is a "witch" man or woman—a person who is looked upon in a mild way by the community as one who has a power for evil.

As an example of what is thought: An infant may be fractious and disturbing a whole hutful of natives by its constant crying in the middle of the night. Two or three young men will silently steal out and turn to the right as they leave the door, following the circle of the hut and keeping close to the wall all the time, under the thatched eaves of the hut.

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They will come upon a man with his arms folded and his head down, coughing in his chest:

"Ooff! Ooff! Ooff!"

Yelling, "*No kuyd!*" (there he is!) the three young men will make a spring at the motionless, coughing figure. The witch man whirls about, and, running backward, dashes away at a breakneck speed.

The three young men fetch up against the hut wall and remark: "*Tongwana! Ouch!*" and, looking at each other in the starlight night, burst out laughing at the thought of how the witch man had whirled about and flashed away, running backward.

They walk back to the kraal door and enter. The mother is talking in a crooning voice to the babe, saying, "*Tutu mana,*" (Sleep, my child) and patting the babe in a caressing way. The young men enter, and one of them remarks, "*Umkele*" (He has gone).

The mother answers—

"Yes; I knew it was a witch man, for as soon as he went away the infant became silent."

Nothing was done to the witch man, as this was not a serious offense.

BY THE time he was about seven years of age Umlimo had already learned many things that would qualify him as a witch-doctor's right-hand man. His eye was keen—so keen that he was able to hit a bumble fly buzzing on the wing, going at the rate of about thirty miles an hour.

He could chase a guinea fowl, catch it and pluck out from its right under wing three feathers which if wrapped around the hot droppings of a herd of wild spring buck and thrown to the four winds, would eventually bring back the whole herd in a few hours' time.

He was cultivating a favorite louse, so that in time he would be able to put it on a person who would in a few moments' time feel as if he or she were covered with lice. As digression it might be said that these favorite lice—one after another are trained until they number ten—are cultivated on certain soil. That is the witch-doctor's own person; and they are trained in such a way that when transplanted on another person's body they run all over him until the victim goes into a frenzy and sometimes has convulsions.

The idea of having and cultivating these pet lice is that when they are placed on any one it merely proves to the community at large that the witch-doctor has power over everything from making rain to controlling a number of body lice. The favorite place for carrying these pets is on the top, right side of the head in a special ball tangle of his kinky hair.

When the victim of the lousing is scratching himself almost to death, and the witch-doctor thinks he has proven his claim, he picks off his pets from the victim's body by simply following the victim's hands, and holding them until each and every one of his pets are placed in his tangled hair.

As to why the victim is unable to scratch away the lice, one has only to talk with the world-war veterans who learned how to "read their shirts" thoroughly but not effectively.

As time went on, Umlimo, tutored by his father, Ututu, learned how to make potions —cough medicine for ailing children made out of dog droppings, crushed crickets and worms put into a calabash with water added. He was also taught how to select different herbs to cure spider-poison, snake-bites, the sting of a tarantula, fevers and other sickness. And above all, to frighten or overawe persons by his glances.

Introspection was constantly being driven into him. When he sat by the fire in a brown study, Ututu would suddenly demand of him—

"*U cinga nga ntomi?*" (What are you thinking about?)

Umlimo would reply—

"*Andozi*" (I don't know.)

Ututu, his father, would almost explode with exasperation.

A little later, Ututu would question Umlimo again, to be informed that Umlimo had been thinking about the king's warriors. Ututu would question him further—

"*Ngoba?*" (why?)

"It is fine to think of them fighting," Umlimo would reply.

Ututu would hardly have answer for this.

About fourteen months before Umlimo was to be "made a man" (go through the act of circumcision) Ututu took him on a long journey to a kraal in order that he might get to know just when the boys of that kraal would have to submit to the "man-making spear."

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Arrived at the kraal, Ututu went to the induna's hut, and Umlimo was taken over by one of the older boys. They gave him sour milk and Kafir corn. This was late in the morning; when night time came there were given to boys the usual boiled, pounded corn and native bread.

They ate ravenously but with restraint. A young man stood just inside the door and looked on whilst they were eating. When they were through he left to join his companions at another hut.

The candidates for manhood were servants to the chief, and the young man watching them was drilling into them the idea of self-restraint in eating, as after being made men they would become part of the grand impi, or fighting force.

Umlimo dipped his hand a couple of times into the dish of *inkobe* that he was sharing with several other boys and then drew away and rested his back against a post. The journey had been a long one from his own hut to this kraal, and he was rather footsore and very tired. In a very few seconds he was fast asleep.

The three boys with whom he had been eating out of the same dish looked at each other with suppressed mischief flashing out of their eyes, for here was an opportunity to put the newcomer through a form of native hazing, which was to tie to his big toe a ball of rags made out of bark cloth and soaked in oil or fat. Once set alight, the victim would do the rest.

The procedure was followed out as usual, only two oil balls were made instead of one, one being tied to the right toe and the other to the left one, and then a torch set alight. The rag balls first sputtered and then burst into a white flame.

Umlimo awoke with startled eyes and gazed at the flaming balls a second or two. Then he drew his right foot up and tried to beat out the flame with his hands. He took a try at the left foot, then stretched out both feet and tried to beat them out with a hand on each ball. He sprang to his feet and dashed around the hut frantically, howling,

"*Amanizi, amanizi!*" (Water, water!)

The crowd of boys in the hut roared with laughter which shook the whole hut. The sweat of terror poured off Umlimo's body. He gained the door and dashed out of it. A young man coming out of the council hut and on his way to his own, saw the balls of fire flashing about on their way toward him. He whirled about, plunged headlong into the hut and hid behind some shields.

The chief thundered out—

"*Ye ntoni?*" (What is the matter?)

The young man uttered one word—"*Isiboko!*" (Ghosts!)

There was an instant's silence, and then the cry of "*Amanizi!*" was heard. Veterans of dozens of raids and many mighty battles shook with fear and groaned to themselves. Umlimo screamed just outside the hut-door. The stalwart warriors inside were set in a panic.

With the instinct of the parent Ututu dashed out of the hut and shouted:

"*Umlimo! Umlimo! Hima izapa! Umlimo!*" (Umlimo! Umlimo! Wait, come here! Umlimo!)

Umlimo stopped, turned around and flung himself into Ututu's open arms. Ututu held Umlimo's arms fast, bent down and tore the flaming balls away from Umlimo's toes.

Manfully Umlimo tried to swallow his sobs of pain and succeeded. Ututu led him to the council hut, where most of the men were standing up, undecided what to do. As Ututu walked in he remarked:

"Here is your ghost. He was being hazed."

The warriors and councilors sighed in relief. The young man came out from behind the shields and was laughed at. Ututu commenced to mix some soothing herbs for Umlimo's burned feet while Umlimo fell into a brown study.

Ututu delayed leaving the kraal that he was visiting till Umlimo's feet were healed from their burns. Ututu had come to the kraal in order to know just when the next band of older boys would be sent out in order to be made men or circumcised.

The indoda (headman) of the kraal had informed Ututu just about what moon the next batch would be sent out. About a fortnight after Umlimo's hazing Ututu would delay no longer, and so he set out for his hut in the hills with Umlimo, whose feet were bound up in green boiled grass to keep them from swelling on the journey home.

Arrived there, Umlimo's burned feet soon healed, as he was a healthy boy with clean blood.

Time went on until the moon (month) came near when Umlimo was to be one of the band that were to become men. Ututu called him one morning as he was on his way

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to look after the family cattle and informed Umlimo that he would have to go alone back to the village which they had visited some moons past and be one of the number of the candidates for manhood.

Umlimo replied calmly that he did not have to go. His father picked up a long stick and threatened to beat him. Umlimo drew himself up and informed his parent that he was a man already. In spite of himself Ututu was surprized, and demanded to know who had acted as judge.

"I myself," replied Umlimo.

Ututu looked at him keenly and remarked—

"All right, young warrior."

"Father," spoke Umlimo, "I want to go with this Mosilikatze who fights."

"Heh!" said Ututu. "With that young ox?"

"Yes," said Umlimo.

For let it be known that Mosilikatze in his early teens had already taken part in numerous big raids, was a veteran of several big battles and was rated as an induna with a regiment of his own.

His ability was very marked, especially in military tactics, it being in the form of swift mobility and crushing power that spared none of his foes. In his person he was full of body with strong, supple hands and the fine features that are the direct heritage of the Amazulu. He was fully developed even then, which was a trifle earlier than most native boys.

Even in his young manhood Mosilikatze's prowess in the field of battle roused the enthusiasm of all the younger element of the powerful tribe of Amazulu. That and his personal magnetism made his own impi irresistible in action; therefore Umlimo felt drawn to him.

Ututu thought over Umlimo's request for a long, long moment. The native never makes any quick decision unless he can't help it, and Ututu was no exception to the rule. Though Umlimo had stolen a march on him by becoming an *um kweta* (initiate) Umlimo watched his parent with exemplary patience for one so young.

At last Ututu spoke.

"Tie up your belongings, warrior; hustle, hustle."

Umlimo yelped with joy and dashed into a hut. Ututu called to one of his five wives, who were working in some fields some distance away, and commanded her to tie up some food in a small bundle, as the *inkonye* (little ox—little man) was going on a journey. As the woman went into one of the huts to prepare the bundle of meal Umlimo came out ready to go on his pilgrimage to Mosilikatze.

From around his neck, tied pendentwise with sinew, hung a charm that Ututu treasured very much. He took this off and gave it to Umlimo. It was Ututu's greatest sorrow that all four of his wives were barren. The fifth one, who was the mother of Umlimo, was the youngest of them all, being the latest addition—or last—to Ututu's household.

The native man is very fond of children, just as much as he is of his cattle, which is the best comparison that can be given. Umlimo, being the one and only child of

THE GREAT TREK BEGAN IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA AND ENDED IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED RHODESIA

Ututu, was very much sheltered and indulged. That is as far as a savage can indulge his offspring. In civilized terms, Umlimo as an only child was utterly spoiled, which explains his subsequent career and development.

The woman came out at last with a bundle which she gave to Umlimo at her husband's command. Ututu called Umlimo to one side, putting his left arm on Umlimo's left shoulder. Ututu pointed out in the

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morning haze in the far distance a *ntaba* (mountain) over which the sun had just risen. He told Umlimo if he kept that mountain in view for three days, he would run across Mosilikatze and his impi.

Umlimo picked up his five sticks, his springbuck horns—which were his diploma showing that he was a witch-doctor—and his bundle of food; tied all these into his blanket at the end of the five sticks; swung them to his shoulder, the left one; and shook hands with his parent—each grasping the other's right thumb, the warriors' usual way of salutation amongst each other; and started on his journey, going toward the rising sun and a far country.

UMLIMO had been traveling about four days when he met a scouting party of Mosilikatze's impi. They took him in charge, and laughed at him when he informed them that he was the son of the great witch-doctor Ututu. Mosilikatze was having a council when Umlimo was brought into what he called a camp. When the council was over Mosilikatze was informed of the fact that there was present an *indoda yanga pandhle* (an outsider) who said he was a witch-doctor and would be willing to help him. Mosilikatze laughed and commanded that the man be brought before him.

Umlimo was brought before Mosilikatze and his witch-doctors.

"Yes, warrior; what is it with you?" Mosilikatze greeted the stranger.

"I am of Ututu; I have come to help you," was Umlimo's important reply.

Mosilikatze looked at him steadily. Umlimo bore the scrutiny well.

"As you say, warrior," Mosilikatze said at last.

"It is echoed what you have said," said Umlimo; and Umlimo became part of Mosilikatze's impi.

Mosilikatze had been sent out on this particular expedition by Chaka to raid and capture the cattle of the "red" Kafirs to the South of his own tribe.

The expedition had been very successful, and Mosilikatze had been thinking to himself that it seemed hardly fair that he should face all the dangers and privations in order to raid cattle and then turn them over to King Chaka.

Umlimo without being asked put forward his objection to having the thousands of cattle returned to the king. A council was held, and Umlimo dominated it. It was decided that Mosilikatze would keep the cattle, and by the order of Umlimo the different herds were driven northeast.

The delay of delivering the cattle into his hands irritated Chaka, who had heard of the expedition's success. A squad of the royal impi was called and ordered to take a message to Mosilikatze to the effect that the king wanted the cattle given over to him immediately.

The message was delivered to Mosilikatze, who, knowing the diabolical temper of the witch-doctor king* was ready to obey the command. Umlimo held out against this idea.

Mosilikatze pointed out that if the cattle were not given over to the king there was no chance of his ever returning to his own people, as Chaka would have him put to death if he returned to the king's kraal.

Umlimo waved his right hand and remarked—"It is a mere nothing."

Mosilikatze did not share this idea in the least, but ultimately decided to retain the spoils.

The squad sent out by the king returned to him and informed him of Mosilikatze's refusal to bring the cattle to the king's kraal. Chaka broke into a terrible rage and ordered the whole squad of warriors killed then and there, and it was done.

He then ordered out a full impi and told the induna to go and capture Mosilikatze and bring him to the kraal. The impi swung out through the sango (gate), went in search of Mosilikatze and found him.

Ten days later they brought him back, prisoner, to Chaka's kraal. The king ordered that Mosilikatze be brought before him, and it was done.

With his dark, fascinating eyes, Chaka stared at Mosilikatze until he trembled. At last the king spoke.

"A jackal would become king, and I, the lion, go out and fight for the jackal. No, never! Pooh, man, you stink! Take him and put him in solitary confinement, and he shall be killed early in the morning."

And it was done.

Umlimo had listened to the king's angry discourse and heard the sentence given. As soon as Mosilikatze was confined in the special hut guarded by half a dozen warriors, Umlimo walked about the kraal and spoke to the different warriors there.

* Chaka was both witch-doctor and king of his tribe.

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He found out that most of them were held there by bonds of fear rather than loyalty, and that Mosilikatze was very popular with the rank and file.

Umlimo exerted himself to the full extent in winning over a dozen or so young men in order to help him carry out a certain plan he had in mind.

Night tide swooped down with no moon and a few stars. Umlimo with the help of the young men rushed the hut that Mosilikatze was confined in, and overpowered the guard. Mosilikatze was freed, and the handful of young men battled through the now aroused warriors of the kraal, won their way through the gate and traveled swiftly all through the night.

Four days later they came up with the heads of cattle that Umlimo had had driven up that way a moon or so back.

From the different kraals that they passed, the young men flocked to join Mosilikatze. The heads of cattle were a great enticement, and besides Mosilikatze was known throughout the country for his military prowess. The kraals that resisted him Mosilikatze crushed easily.

It was not until Mosilikatze's impi was north of what is now known as Kimberley that the strongest opposition was met; for the *am bunu* (Boers) had made one of their famous *laagers* with their wagons more than two miles in circumference, *deseel bomm na deseel bomm* (whiffle-tree to whiffle-tree), behind which with grim determination the Boer men with their wives and children were entrenched.

The burghers, armed with their muzzle-loading guns, with hard steel blue eyes and brick red faces, vowed that they would "show these wild men not to be so overbearing; we swear; yes, sir, we swear."

After the Boers had had more than a week's perfect preparation for the natives, Mosilikatze's horde was seen coming toward the *laager*. When it was a quarter of a mile away the impi broke into a trot. It was not until the warriors were fifty yards away that the order to fire was given.

The first volley crumpled up the leading ranks; still they came. The second volley stopped them within ten yards of the *laager;* for, having learned from past encounters with these organized fighting savages, the burghers had arranged it so that part of them should shoot in a kneeling position and some in the "tents" of the wagons, while those standing up should shoot after the first volley.

In this alternating way a constant firing would be going. Whilst one lot was firing the second line could be loading their cumbersome muzzle-loaders. The women had the spare guns loaded in case things got too hot. When the second volley had been sent crashing into Mosilikatze's men, the impi wavered in its stride.

As the third volley came roaring after the second and the shaken horde turned in its tracks and fled back in the same direction whence it had just come, Mosilikatze in a fury knocked indunas down with his knobkerry. The warriors dared to expostulate with him, telling him to look at their dead companions.

Mosilikatze browbeat them and by sheer force of his will made them form up for another charge. They trotted up but had hardly got up speed when a double volley mowed them down. They fell over each other getting out of the way of that withering fire. Mosilikatze acted like one possessed as he choked a man here, flung another one away there, and cracked a third one's skull with his knobkerry.

Once more they tried and failed. As Mosilikatze stamped about and beat his chest in a frenzy a strong voice coming from the *laager* shouted:

"*Zowka! Zowka! Zowka! Mfanyana!*" (Here! Here! Here! Warriors!)

The impi turned and saw Umlimo on top of the tarpaulin covering to a Boer's wagon. On the last charge he had made a dash for this particular wagon, stepped on a wheel-hub and hoisted himself up by the topside of the wheel.

The wild yelling of the impi, together with the shouting and shooting with its attendant confusion, had enabled him to achieve his goal without being seen. The impi, on seeing Umlimo waving his arms on top of the wagon, gave a mighty yell and flung themselves headlong on the *laager*.

A double volley at ten paces from the *laager*, with another closely after it, did not stop them. Under the wagons and over them scrambled the impi. The burghers fought like Trojans. They used sticks, stones, fists. Gun-butts were brought crashing against strong, hard skulls. A wagon went crashing over with a snapping of wood as hundreds of the savage horde climbed on top of it. As it collapsed, a

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score or more of burgher defenders, who were bunched together either inside the "tent" or under the heavy wagon, were crushed to death.

Through this breach, Mosilikatze's impi poured in and slaughtered the older men by grasping hold of the Boers' patriarchal beards and hitting them with their knob-kerries.

Umlimo had jumped down on the inside of the *laager* as soon as he saw the impi plunge forward in response to his call. An alert young woman had taken a pot-shot at him as he stood on top of the wagon, but pulled the trigger just a second too late.

Umlimo distracted the defending burghers by his very presence; for many frightened women and children screamed in terror:

"They are here! O God in heaven!"

Consequently the second volley was not as steady as it might have been, nor was the reloading of the first liners. The women with the emergency guns did not hand over the weapons so quickly as was needed because of Umlimo's strategy.

By late afternoon the carnage was over. A few young boys escaped on horseback, but all of the burghers with their wives and children were slaughtered. What Umlimo had coveted for a long time came into his possession—and that was rifles and gunpowder.

He informed Mosilikatze of it, and the warriors were commanded to pick up every gun that they might come across. Kegs of powder were hoisted on stalwart shoulders. A few heads of the large herd of oxen that were there to pull the wagons were killed and roasted hastily. The horses were given over to the warriors who could ride them, and this cavalry was sent forward as scouts.

The meal over, the impi once more went on the march. The vultures that had been wheeling overhead swooped down to the ground to feed on the dead burghers and their families. The twilight breeze blew softly, and the torn coverings of wagon-tents flapped loudly, and night came.

THE news of Mosilikatze's victory over the *laager* traveled swiftly from tribe to tribe, making his conquest easy; for bands of warriors from different tribes flocked to his impi, until from small beginnings Mosilikatze commanded an *umkos om kulu* (a large army). The Kalanya opposed Mosilikatze, and were put to rout. The bragging, timid-hearted Swazi tried to oppose the stalwart warriors, but did not remain to see the end.

Mosilikatze swept up-country with his immense impi, which was absolutely under his desperate will, until they reached the Matopos Hills that Umlimo had dreamed about. Here they were to make their home; but first they would have to subdue the tribes living there.

A reign of terror was begun. Moon after moon, raiding warriors would swoop down on the kraals of the district and kill all the men, but spare the young boys and girls. The latter were very much treasured, as with such a large army of men there were not enough women for them.

MOSILIKATZE left his capital kraal, Bulawayo, with a great army and marched toward the Zambezi River, terrorizing the Mashona and Manika tribes as usual.

From there he led them toward Empunya (Pungwe marshes). This campaign took more than three years, but profited Mosilikatze next to nothing, and so on his return to Bulawayo he was not in a very joyful state of mind. He was less so when he found out on his return that his two leading wives were at enmity with each other, as both claimed that their respective sons would inherit the kingship.

The two boys who were the immediate cause of this controversy were Kuruman and Lobenguella. Both wives had been captured on a raid and had not been dowered for. Because of this each one claimed to be the right-handed (first) wife, whose offspring by tribal law is the next to rule in the event of the king's death.

Mosilikatze listened to the pleas of both wives and then gave the command that both boys should be strangled the next day when they came back from tending the cattle. Umlimo heard the king's sentence, and walked out into the veld in search of the boys.

He came upon them playing the popular game of heads and tails. He looked them over carefully and then commanded them to lead him to where the cattle were. They obeyed. He questioned them as to how many head of cattle there were in the herd.

Lobenguella gave him the count promptly and accurately, while Kuruman stood by,

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tongue-tied and abashed. Umlimo looked Lobenguella over keenly and then came to a decision that was very far-reaching.

He determined to save Lobenguella by detaining him and the cattle, and to send the backward Kuruman to the kraal to be strangled. He caught hold of Kuruman and demanded of him—

"Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," stammered Kuruman.

"Who am I?"

"Umlimo, the great witch-doctor."

"That is right. I want you to go back to the kraal and tell them that Lobenguella is fighting off a lot of wild beasts. You will be rewarded."

Kuruman set off back to the kraal, where on arrival, before he could follow out Umlimo's instructions he was promptly strangled to death. Two mornings later Lobenguella and Umlimo drove the cattle back to the kraal.

When Umlimo was seen to be herding the cattle with Lobenguella the kraal was amazed. A squad of warriors came up to Lobenguella in order to carry out the king's command. Umlimo motioned them away, and strode toward the royal hut with Lobenguella before him.

Mosilikatze was seated on the side of the hut where the sun was shining. As Umlimo and Lobenguella came to a halt, he looked up and demanded—

"What is it?"

Umlimo stood off and spoke in an oratorical way:

"Three days past I heard the greatest voice (the king) command that two be strangled. One of these two was a coward, the other was a bull. There came a menace and the coward ran away; the bull stayed and defended our cattle. Here is the bull," finished Umlimo as he grandly waved his hand toward Lobenguella.

Mosilikatze was flattered by Umlimo's speech. Getting to his feet, he went over to where Lobenguella was standing; and, placing his hand on his son's right shoulder, he filled out his chest proudly and remarked:

"I am a bull too; all mine are real bulls. I sire nothing but real, strong bulls. This defender is a real bull. He shall not be killed. No, not my bull."

Umlimo smiled. The king looked at him, shuddered involuntarily and turned away.

A little while later the king became ill. Umlimo attended him constantly; but the king got no better, and suddenly died mysteriously. How? Only Umlimo could tell; but no induna dared question him, no matter how great his power. The whole tribe could only look at one another with hands over their mouths, shake their heads and go their ways. Lobenguella came to the throne with Umlimo the hard driving power behind it.

Time went on, and missionaries labored amongst the natives with Lobenguella's consent, who appalled them by what seemed to be an inhuman cruelty against which they protested.

Lobenguella blandly informed them if he did not kill those around him from time to time in order to show his power, they would kill him, but he preferred to be the killer.

Traders came up-country and bartered with the natives. Lobenguella was a factor to be reckoned with. He learned how to read a little, but not to write. His country was rich, therefore he received flattery beyond all measure.

There came a young man with a spacious forehead, a determined nose, a pair of steady, hard, blue eyes, a firm mouth with a voluptuous, whimsical underlip, a tremendous head that seemed too large for his body. His name was Cecil John Rhodes; he came to get a concession from Lobenguella. And, because of his knowledge of native psychology, Rhodes was successful where many other men had failed.

The understanding was that Lobenguella was to be paid a certain sum a month for permitting the outsider to dig for gold and diamonds and other mineral wealth. Lobenguella was to see to it that the newcomers were not molested in any way. Lobenguella agreed, and everything was satisfactory to all concerned except one—Umlimo.

Lobenguella built a fine house for himself a few yards away from the tree that he sat under while watching different victims executed.

SPASMODIC raids by the warriors were made on the settlers in the new country so often that the man with the spacious forehead saw that his pet scheme would fail unless the raids were stopped. An appeal was made to Lobenguella to see to it that these depredations should cease. Lobenguella sent stern word that all fighting should stop under penalty of death.

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Yet the raids became more frequent. Word was sent out that the natives were buying arms from the traders. An order from the Cape was received to the effect that slugs should not be sold to natives. The warriors on being refused slugs first left the stores, but in a day or so were back buying up all the three-legged iron vessels. This boom in three-legged iron vessels pleased and puzzled the traders and was unexplained until an uprising occurred all over Matabeleland. Having found out that no slugs were to be bought by his emissaries, Umlimo had cut off the legs of the iron vessels at the top for about an inch. The powder charge was poured into the natives' old-fashioned muzzle-loading guns, and the cut-off tips of vessel-legs were forced in and rammed down. This missile made a large, gaping wound and knocked a man over when a hit was scored.

The man with the spacious forehead came up-country and went to see Lobenguella, who explained that it was not his fault that the raiding went on, but Umlimo's. A detailed account of Umlimo's habits was given, and the cave where he lived in the Matopo Hills was pointed out. Like other men who reach power through the help of friends, Lobenguella forgot who had helped him to attain power.

The man with the spacious forehead went back to the Cape and his duties. He sent word to the United States to a Major Burnham who had fought against another race of savage men on that continent, the Indians, with a celebrity by the name of Buffalo Bill. Major Burnham responded to the cablegram accepting the offer to come over.

Ten weeks later Major Burnham in company with the Rhodesian Mounted Troopers was riding amongst the high hills of the Matopos. He had maps of the district showing the location of Umlimo's hut. Major Burnham had gone over the ground several times and knew it well.

There came a day when he decided to venture to go out and do what he had been commissioned to do. Late on a certain afternoon he rode out alone, and a mile away from Umlimo's cluster of huts he left his pony and walked up to a knoll that faced straight into the door of Umlimo's personal hut, the sun shining to the west while Major Burnham waited hour after hour for Umlimo to come out.

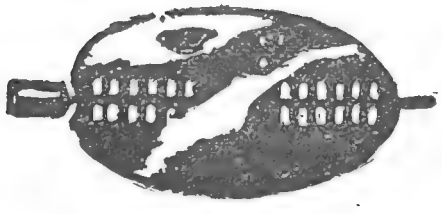
While Umlimo sat in his hut looking straight at the knoll where Major Burnham was lying on his stomach, his finger on his gun's trigger, Umlimo concentrated all his mind to frighten away the menace that waited for him. Just as a mouse is fascinated by the look of a snake, so was Umlimo drawn to the knoll.

The sun sank behind the high Matopo Hills, and cast soft shadows on the scene. Major Burnham thought that he would fail again, as he had watched from this place several times. As the sun dipped, Umlimo came out. There was no mistaking him. Tall and spare with a commanding presence, he loomed up in front of his hut and stood looking at the knoll.

Major Burnham squeezed the trigger of his rifle. There was a report, a screech of a bullet in flight; and Umlimo dropped dead, shot through the head. A boy saw the flash from the knoll, knew it was gun-fire, saw Umlimo drop dead, went up to him and yelled out this information to the witch-doctor's followers.

In an instant the hills throbbed and reechoed to the messages of the drums. Major Burnham slipped away from the knoll as soon as he saw Umlimo fall, ran to his pony and rode out of the zone of danger. The Matabele power was broken, for with Umlimo dead there was no one to inspire them to go on the warpath.

WHEN the Rt. Hon. Cecil John Rhodes was buried in the Matopo Hills he was the only man out of civilization who was ever accorded the royal salute for a dead king. This was owing to popular belief that Umlimo's spirit had gone into him, because he was able to inspire the natives to do his will.



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TIGER RIVER *A Four-Part Story Part II*

BY ARTHUR O. FRIEL

Author of "Black Hawk," "Tupahn—the Thunderstorm," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

DEEP in the South American jungle on the banks of the upper Amazon, José Martinez, outlaw, camped and meditated his troubles. Suddenly he was startled by a voice from across the water; and, as he waited, a river-canoe, containing twelve native paddlers and four white men, approached. With a shout of recognition José welcomed the white travelers.

"It's the Señor Tim Ryan," he cried.

The other three were McKay, Knowlton and Rand—all his old friends from North America. They informed José that they were in search of gold and asked him to join them. He accepted and told them of the rich prospects in the little-known region of the Tigre Yacu—a branch of the Amazon—and immediately they were fired to go.

They set about procuring three small canoes at a native town a short way down the river, and got rid of their large boat. After a quarrel with a Moyamba trader there—an incident which promised to brew trouble later on—they started out anew and soon were well into the savage territory of the head-hunters.

As they were making camp one evening Knowlton and Rand volunteered to go into the jungle to fetch some game. They had just succeeded in bagging two ducks when a fierce storm came up, and the two sought refuge in the hollow of an enormous tree. Just as Rand reached the shelter a savage leaped upon him, and the two fell, fighting. A bolt of lightning crashed, and Knowlton, who had not yet entered, saw the tree topple, imprisoning his friend and the strange assailant. The next moment he himself was knocked unconscious.

Later, the rest of the party, searching for their missing companions, came upon the helpless Knowlton and rescued him from two prowling *tigres*. Rand proved to be unhurt; the man who had attacked him, a white Indian, had been killed by the falling tree.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WHITE INDIANS

DAWN broke.

Up in the tree-tops birds and mammals started from sleep and hurled a discordant chorus of squawks, squeaks, hoots and howls out into the gray blanket of night-formed fog. Down beside a little creek men stirred, peered at their insect-bars, yawned, stretched, and sat up in their hammocks. From one of them sounded a muffled grunt of pain, instantly subdued.

"How's the leg, Dave?" asked Knowlton, protruding a white-swathed head.

"Little sore," admitted Rand, inwardly cursing himself for that groan. "Nothing to speak of. How's the head?"

"Head?" with elaborate carelessness. "Forgot I had one."

"Ye're a couple o' cheerful liars, the pair o' ye," rumbled Tim. "Dave, ye'd oughter be on crutches, and, looey, yer neck's three inches shorter'n 'twas yesterday mornin', not sayin' nothin' about a bump on yer bean as big as me fist and gosh knows how many stitches in yer scalp. Lay down again like good dogs."

Knowlton scowled with official severity, forgetful of the fact that the frown was hidden under his bandages.

"Sergeant Ryan, you're reduced to the

"*Tiger River*," *copyright, 1922, by Arthur O. Friel.*

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ranks and fined one drink of hooch for insolence—" he began.

"*Ssssst!* Hush; *teniente!*" José cut in.

His hawk face was shoved forward. His thunderous gun had slid into his hand. All froze into postures of listening. Except for the animal noises, no sound came to them save the monotonous drip of moisture in the dank jungle round about.

"Something moved yonder," the Peruvian muttered, twitching his head. "An animal sneaking past, perhaps. It is too early for Indians to be moving. But not too early for us to move."

With which he arose, rolled his hammock, and pitched it into his canoe. The others, with wary glances at the murky shadows, followed his example. In less than a minute the little palm hut was bare.

But none embarked. Men must eat, and Tim voiced the general sentiment when he growled:

"By cripes, I'm goin' to have me coffee before I hit the river, and have it hot. Any war-whoops that want to mix it with me before I git ready to go can come a-runnin', poison arrers and all."

So, with ears alert but no haste, the five made their morning meal by the aid of the faithful *sindicaspi* wood, which burned smokily in the heavy air but did its duty. When the frugal meal was finished all hands rolled the usual cigarets and squatted beside the coals until the butts scorched their hardened fingers. But there was no more banter, and each man's gun stood within elbow-length of him.

Then, when remaining longer would have been mere bravado, they moved into the canoes and pushed away. Rand limped while getting aboard, and in his dugout he sat on some supplies, his torn leg eased out in front of him. Knowlton gave no sign of feeling less energetic than usual. In silence the small flotilla slipped away toward the misty river.

Once more on the wider water, they found the fog still too thick for any but slow travel. It was thinning, and patches of it wavered and almost dissolved, giving short views of one or the other of the banks; but the great body of it clung stubbornly to the ground. Stroking lazily, they progressed gradually upstream, awaiting the dissolution of the murk. Tim found time and inclination for a little grumbling.

"Pretty slow so far," he declared. "Ain't nothin' happened but shootin' three cats and gittin' looey and Dave out o' the hole. Where's all them head-hunters and the thing that bites off fellers' toes and makes 'em batty? Where's the bags o' gold? All we git out o' this here, now, Tiger River is bug-bites, seems like."

"Well, you're getting plenty of them, aren't you?" countered Knowlton. "One thing at a time. Trouble with you is that you're sore because you missed getting into that tree-racket of ours."

"Oh, yeah. And ye're so sore ye can't see straight because ye did git into it. All the same, I would like to git a li'l action out o' this trip. I wasn't never brought up to push a paddle for nothin'. When do we git to the gold?"

"Wouldn't be a bad idea to pan a little dirt before long and see what we get," suggested Rand. "Water's pretty shallow now, and we're well up."

McKay nodded.

"Been thinking of that," he conceded. "Might give us some idea of what's ahead."

José, the real source of the expedition, said nothing, though he heard all. His eyes kept plumbing the slowly clearing shores. Gradually his strokes lengthened as the mist rolled upward, and the others automatically adapted their pace to his. At length the fog burned away completely, and the canoes swung into their regular speed.

For several hours they forged on, silent as usual, hot as usual, bitten as usual by the insect swarms. Along the bank little life showed—macaws, quarrelsome toucans, surly male *cotomonos* which howled monkey execrations at the intruders while the females scurried away through the branches, carrying their young clinging on their backs. Then on the quiet surface appeared bubbles, floating down from ahead; and to the ears of the canoemen came a soft, elusive sound like wind among high leaves.

"Ah! We approach a *mal-paso*—a rapid," José announced. "Do you not hear the water, *amigos?* It now is low and quiet; but we soon shall reach rocks."

The mechanical swing of the paddles quickened a bit. Rocks! For many long days the voyagers from the Andes had seen not the tiniest stone—nothing but clay banks and the everlasting walls of tree and bush. Now the arrival at rock-country meant harder work and slower progress, but it also meant that the mysterious Cordillera

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del Pastassa, offshoot of the precious Llanganati, was creeping nearer to them. And up there to the northwest might be—what? The dream-city of El Dorado? The fabulous Mother Lode of all gold? Who knew? Save one man whose brain was twisted, none had ever come back to tell.

Peering over-side for the first time in hours, McKay saw gravel on the bottom. His iron face lightened a little, and he put another pound of power on his paddle.

But when the rocks appeared the eager faces of the North Americans fell. Accustomed to the fierce *mal-pasos* and the gorged *pongos* of the upper Marañon, they had unconsciously looked for a chasm, even though small. The obstacles now before them could hardly be dignified by the name of "bad-pass." They were only a few boulders at a bend, protruding above the surface like dingy, worn-down molars, visible only because of the low stage of the water. Yet they were rocks, real rocks, the farthest outposts of the host of mountain-fragments waiting beyond. And, despite their insignificance, the treasure-hunters smiled at them and at the sleepily murmuring water flowing down between them.

"Here's where you can exercise your manly right arm, Tim, and pan some gold," Knowlton chaffed. "Just hop over with a shovel and dig down to bed-rock. We'll get lunch."

"Huh! I'd dig half-way to China before I'd hit bed-rock in this here mud country. But I'll pan her once anyways, jest to see what's the color."

And, when the canoes had been forced beyond the barrier, he did. With a dexterity betokening much practise somewhere farther west, he swirled the water and the mingled mud and gravel in his pan until he was down to the dregs.

"Begorry, it's here!" he exploded. "Nothin' much—jest a few flakes—but it's color! Free gold, gents! Lookit here!"

Eager heads clustered over his pan. For a moment there was silence.

"Uh-huh," commented McKay. "Pretty poor showing, though."

"True for ye, cap. But mebbe further up we'll hit the real stuff. This here bed is all gummed up with mud. I'll give her another whirl, jest for luck."

His luck seemed not to improve, however, though he scooped up several more pans from below and worked them with extreme care. His first enthusiasm oozed away. After giving the last pan a couple of tilts and a sour survey he desisted without trying to wash it.

"Yeah, she's got to come acrost better'n this or I won't never tell nobody she's a friend o' mine," he asserted, clawing out some muddy gravel. "If only these dirty li'l stones was somethin' besides dirt——"

HE STOPPED, his mouth open. His red lashes lifted, and his eyes seemed to bulge. Very carefully he set the pan down on the nearest rock. With the fingers of his free hand he rubbed the "dirty li'l stones" in his cupped palm against one another. Then he picked one out and grated it along the boulder beside him.

"Ho-lee jum-pin' Jee-hosh—" he began.

Then, mute, he held up the stone. From its scraped side flashed a yellow gleam.

"Nugget!" barked Knowlton.

With sudden energy Tim scraped his find again, then scrubbed it under water with a hard thumb-ball. When he again held it aloft it shone like a gilt ball.

"Sure as the Kaiser got crazy, 'tis a nugget!" he exulted. "Mud stuck to it and camouflaged it. Weighs a couple ounces, easy. Forty dollars, gents—eight bucks apiece for you guys that ain't panned nothin' but me. Now le's see ye do a lick or two o' work for yerselves. Come on in, the water's fine. Beat ol' Timmy Ryan if ye can! Oh, you li'l yeller baby!"

His exuberant challenge met with instant response. Into the river splashed his companions, heedless of hunger and of recent injuries from tiger-claw and falling tree. They brought up fistfuls of gravel which had lodged around the boulders, and with minute care inspected each one. Tim, carefully buttoning his nugget in a pocket after assuring himself that the pocket had no hole in it, fell to scraping and rubbing each of the little stones which had suddenly become potential treasures.

One by one, however, he cast them away. The whole pan received a rigid inspection, but no glimmer of yellow showed. He brought up another panful from the same spot where he had caught the nugget. This, too, yielded no result.

At length the dripping company ceased its labors, empty-handed.

"Guess you're the only lucky one in the

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crowd, Tim," admitted Knowlton. "Let's see that nugget."

Tenderly Tim drew it out and handed it over.

"Don't drop it, for the love o' Mike," he adjured. "If she once gits back in the muck she's gone. Water's all riled up."

With a nod, the lieutenant studied the chunk of metal. Then he passed it to McKay.

"No wonder we didn't find any more," he said. "That nugget never rolled down this stream."

"Huh? Oh, I s'pose it rained down last night, then, or mebbe it fell off one o' these here trees," jeered the red man.

"It never came down in the water," insisted the other. "It's too rough. Water would wear it smooth. Look at the stones around here—even these big ones are smoothed off. Not a sharp edge on any of them."

"Right," concurred McKay. "It's well rounded, but not smooth. You can feel the edges, and see them too."

"Um. Begorry, ye're right, cap. But how'd she git here—one lonesome nugget like that? 'Tain't right."

All stared at it, groping for a solution. Presently Knowlton laughed:

"Old Dame Fortune left it here for us, maybe, to encourage us. Sort of a come-on stunt, eh? Like a girl dropping her handkerchief on the sidewalk when you look good to her. She's a flirty old dame, is Lady Fortune."

"*Si*," grinned José. "But you are forgetting Rafael Gonzales, comrades. It may have been he, not the old lady, who dropped this here. It is less than a month since he returned to Iquitos, as I have told you, with his bag of gold. Is it not quite likely that he lost this, and other nuggets as well, on his outward trail?"

"Guess you've hit the only sensible answer," agreed Rand. "Come on, let's eat."

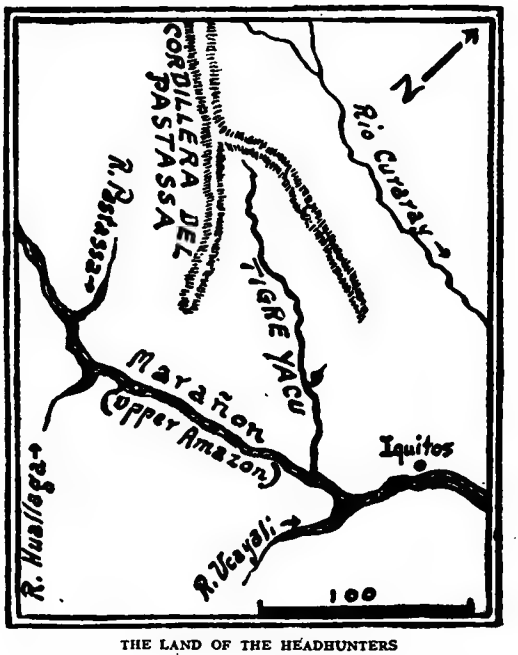
The close-drawn knot of men drew apart and turned toward shore. With a sudden gulp Tim halted short. His mates froze.

Armed Indians confronted them.

There on the bank, arrows drawn back and aimed with deadly accuracy at each white man's breast, stood a dozen hard-faced savages. Their skins were light, their hair black and cut straight across the brow, their bodies naked save for tooth-and-claw necklaces and red loin-cloths. In stature, in build, and in expression they might have been brothers of the dead man left last night in the tree-butt tomb beside the black lagoon.

Motionless from surprize for an instant, the men in the water then began reaching stealthily toward their wet pistols.

"*Alto!*" snapped a sharp voice behind them. "Lift those hands or you die!"



THE LAND OF THE HEADHUNTERS

The five heads jerked around. On the other bank they beheld eight more of the white Indians. These held no bows. Instead, seven of them squinted down the barrels of big-bored rifles The eighth, standing a little to the rear, had a similar rifle but was not aiming it. His face had a markedly Spanish cast.

The hands of the North Americans poised exactly where they were. The situation was utterly hopeless. But Captain McKay's voice, when he replied, was as cold and calm as if he held the power.

"If we do not die here we die hereafter. When and how?"

Across the mouth of the Spanish-Indian twitched a fleeting smile:

"You are cool. Die now if you will. All men die. If you do not die here you may live long. Strong men live."

"Live through what? Torture?"

"No torture. We kill swiftly. Among us a man is all alive or all dead."

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McKay glanced once at the bowmen, running his keen gaze along their hard eyes. He looked back at the seven riflemen and the Spanish-speaking leader.

"No good, boys," he said quietly. "We haven't a chance. Better surrender."

His hands rose. Reluctantly his companions followed his example. Turning about, the captain waded across to the shore where the leader stood. In his wake swashed the others, still covered from both banks. Up on the land they went, and halted.

"We live on," said McKay, smiling bleakly. "Now what?"

The leader grunted something. The riflemen closed in. Five put their gun-muzzles against the abdomens of their captives. The other two passed behind the white men.

"Now you will put the hands down. Behind your backs."

As the order was obeyed the two spare riflemen lashed the wrists of each prisoner tightly with fiber cord. In less than two minutes all were securely bound. Their weapons were left in their sheaths.

"Now what?" demanded McKay again.

The evanescent smile fled once more across the Spanish face.

"Now we walk. One of you shall die. The others—*quien sabe?*"

CHAPTER IX

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

GLUMLY the pinioned men stood on the bank and watched their captors gather around the canoes. Despite the firmness of their bonds—every one of which had been sharply inspected by the leader of the gang—they still were guarded by two riflemen, one of whom stood at each end of the line, ready to shoot any prisoner making a sudden move. The other gun-bearers had waded across the river.

Now, under direction of the leader, half a dozen of the wild men busied themselves in thoroughly washing every piece of the white men's equipment. The rifles, the axes, the clothing, the bags and heavy tins, the cooking and mining utensils—everything was plunged into the river, swashed about and scrubbed by rough fingers, then thrown upward on the shore. Watching the immersion of the guns and the puzzled examination given the bolt-actions afterward, the captives silently raged over the carelessness in leaving their rifles while they clawed in the mud for gold. The wrath of José was not quite silent.

"*Carramba!*" he gritted in an undertone. "Caught like the fools we are! Snared by sneaking snakes of *Indios* while we snatched at stones! I, José Martinez, trapped like a child! *Si*, wash those guns, you measles-fearing man-killers! I hope you catch a hundred sicknesses!"

Forgotten was his recent statement that he would rather fall prey to savages than to his own countrymen; forgotten the fact that these wild men had spared his life, at least for the time. His pride in his ability to protect himself was cut to the quick, and in the same hissing monotone he heaped vitriolic maledictions on his captors.

The two guards stirred, scowling at him and moving their gun-muzzles into line with his stomach.

"Let up, José," muttered Knowlton. "We all feel the same way, but mum's the word. Less talk and more thinking may pull us out of the hole yet."

The outlaw's teeth clicked, and he said no more, though his eyes still smouldered. Then came a call from the Spanish-speaking leader.

"What is here?"

He pointed downward at one of the sealed tins. Baffled by the heavy solder, neither he nor his men had been able to open them.

"Open it if you dare," snarled José. "Those boxes are full of diseases which kill quicker than the bite of a snake."

The effect of the retort was remarkable. Every man of the Indians jumped back from those harmless tins as if they truly were filled with virulent death. Several, who had handled the containers, leaped into the river again and frantically scrubbed their hands.

The outlaw broke into a jeering laugh. Maddened, the leader of the tribesmen plunged in and came straight for him, the rest following close. Their glittering eyes and hard mouths spoke death to the captives.

"Halt!" snapped McKay. "Do you kill a man for warning you? He has done you great service. The diseases can not harm you unless you let them out. Now that he has told you, you will not let them out."

His quick wit saved his party. The

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Indians, though set to kill, glanced at their leader. That leader stared at McKay's inscrutable face.

"You have promised that only one shall die," added McKay. "Is your tongue forked?"

The other's gaze swerved to his own men and came back.

"My tongue is straight," he declared. "What I have said shall be."

He gave a sign to his men. Their weapons sank. He spoke, with a backward jerk of the head. They turned slowly, went back into the water, and began bringing across the equipment—all except the tins, which they avoided.

"You are a good leader," McKay complimented. "Your men obey."

A touch of cruel pride flitted across the other's face.

"They know it is best to obey," was the significant retort.

With which he turned his back to the prisoners and watched the transportation of the loot.

The Scot's compliment had been no flattery. The sinewy white Indian was a good commander. He handled his followers almost as if he were an American or a European, instead of a savage son of the jungle; and, despite their position, the ex-soldiers watched with appreciative eyes.

"Spanish blood in this fellow," thought McKay. "It sticks out all over him. Wonder if José's tale was right, and this chap's descended from Spanish stock. Wonder who they all are, anyhow. Wonder why we're not killed at once. Oh, well, we may learn."

Aloud he asked:

"Who are you? Yámeos?"

"Men of the forest," came the curt answer. "Now walk."

He tilted his head to the left, indicating the direction. The captives turned downstream. A couple of Indians glided in front of them and led the way. Behind the adventurers the main body closed in, walking in file, carrying the plunder from the canoes.

Almost at once the five found themselves in a path. A narrow, twisting trail through the forest, it was, and scarcely visible even to a man following it. But it was a path, perhaps a rod back from the edge of the bank, where the voyagers had supposed the bush to be utterly trackless; and along it the guiding pair slipped ahead as fast as if it were a broad highway. The bound men following them found themselves hard put to it to maintain the speed set by the pace-makers, for their walking wind had been shortened by many days of river travel. Rand, limping along on torn leg-muscles, found the going doubly hard. But he set his teeth and strove to keep up.

IT WAS the commander of the party who gave the word to slow down. He trod close at Rand's heels, and he saw the lameness of the green-eyed man. Yet he made no effort to ease the prisoner's difficulty until he himself felt the consequences of it.

The injured leg, stiff and sore, failed to clear a projecting root, and Rand stumbled and fell. The Indian behind tripped over him and bumped his head sharply against a tree. He was up instantly, glaring at the prostrate man and at the tree he had hit; but he realized that the blame rested not on the prisoner but on the pace at which they were moving. He snapped something at the guiding pair, who had continued on. They stopped.

The leader glowered suspiciously at Rand's leg, as if he thought the prisoner to be malingering; for Rand now wore his boots, concealing the bandages around the limb.

"What ails the leg?" he demanded. "The forest is no place for the lame."

"The claws of a *tigre*," panted Rand, still prone and snatching a moment's rest.

A quick light flickered in the hard eyes.

"When did the claws of the *tigre* strike?"

"Last night."

A short nod and a tightening of the mouth followed. Roughly he hauled Rand to his feet. To the pair ahead he grunted briefly. They resumed their advance, but at a slower pace. Wondering what was in the leader's mind, but thankful for slower progress, Rand went on.

For perhaps two hours the march continued without a halt. Glancing from time to time at the sun-slanted shadows, the captives observed that they were working steadily southward. Now and then they caught gleams of water at their left, where the river wound close to the path and then veered off again. At length, at a cool little brook, the whole band stopped to drink.

Here McKay asked a question which had been puzzling him for some time.

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"Where do you get your guns?"

"From men who came here before you," was the straightforward answer. "We use them only for war. The yellow-things-that-kill are few. From those men I learned the tongue you speak. From you we shall learn how to use these new guns—before you go."

As he spoke he frowned down at McKay's own rifle, which he held in one hand. McKay had seen him trying to pull back the bolt, without first lifting it. So far as the Indian was concerned, the gun was locked tight. The captain did not enlighten him regarding the method of working a bolt action.

"Before we go where?" he demanded.

"Where the other men went."

His eyes strayed to Tim, red-bearded, red-headed. His shadowy smile flitted across his mouth and was gone. Abruptly he arose and gave the sign to move on.

As they resumed their march, a chill crept up the backs of the five. All had seen that brief stare at red Tim and the slight smile that went with it. All knew this man had said one of them should die. And all recalled the grim jest of José, made days before; that Tim's hair would be braided into the hair-belt of the Jivero who killed him. That careless joke now loomed as a prophecy.

Yet on the heels of this thought came another—not one of their captors wore a girdle of human hair. They might not be Jiveros. Their commander had promised life to four of them. And—they could only march on, hoping for some miraculous change of luck.

For another hour or more no word was spoken. The occasional sidelong glances of the captives showed them that they had left the river, for no water-gleam now came to their eyes. At length they did meet water again, but it was a creek, not the river. Up along this they filed for a couple of hundred yards. Then they debouched into a clearing.

An oval-shaped house of up-and-down logs, thickly thatched with palm; a knot of armed men standing before its door; several small mud huts around it; a plantation at the rear, with women at work—these were the first impressions of the white men. McKay, striding at the head of his unfortunate company and bulking tall over the heads of the two guides, noted three more things as they neared the big house—that it was big enough to hold a hundred people, that it looked much more new than the mud huts beyond, and that the warriors before it showed signs of travel. Their faces lit up as they saw the captives, and they grunted as if they now saw something for which they had been hunting. The captain, used to watching faces, guessed that this party also had been out beating the bush in a search for strangers.

Almost up to the door the captors and captives went. Then the guides stopped. The prisoners halted. The Indians behind spread out and surrounded them in a half-horseshoe, open end toward the door. Through that door, without awaiting a summons, now came a man whom the newcomers recognized as the chief.

Slightly taller than his men, past middle age, harsh of face, with brown eyes burning like tawny coals in deep sockets, he was a grim figure. In his thick black hair, unblanched by any sign of gray, parrot-plumes rose as his crown of rank. Like his men, he wore a necklace of tiger-claws; but, unlike them, he had also arm-bands of big fang-teeth, and—a hair girdle.

Wide and thick and black was that sinister cincture, reaching from the waist to the loins. In it gleamed no lighter shade; no brown, no gold, no red. But every man of the five saw that the hollow eyes of the ruler, after passing along their faces, returned to the blond beard of Knowlton and the glinting red of Tim's hair.

He said no word until the report of the capture was made. When the white Indian holding McKay's gun finished his tale he pointed at Rand. The chief followed the gesture, looked down at the lame man's boots, lifted his gaze and somberly studied the impassive face of the former Raposa. Then he spoke.

In a tone low but harsh as his face he ground out a curt sentence. Two men went to one of the little mud huts. Immediately they came out again, bearing between them a pole litter on which lay a rigid figure covered with big leaves.

Straight up to the prisoners they came. On the ground before them they put the litter down. With a few swift motions they stripped the leaves from the still form.

The five looked down at the dead face and the torn throat of the wild man who had fallen fighting in the hollow tree.

For a moment there was utter stillness.

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Then the whites, looking up, found the chief's eyes boring into their faces. Abruptly he spoke again. The Spanish-speaking leader repeated his words in the language which the prisoners could understand.

"You have killed this man of mine. You have torn the throat of a hunter of my tribe and let out his spirit. For that you all should die. But there is other use for you. So you shall live to pull the wheel. All but the man who killed my warrior. That man dies. Who is he?"

McKay answered.

"The great chief has it wrong. This man was killed by a tree splintered by storm. We took him off the splinter. We laid him back in the tree where no *tigre* should destroy him. We left two dead *tigres* to guard him. Let the chief blame the storm."

The hard mouth of the chief only grew tighter.

"The storm harms us not. You men have killed my hunter. One of you must go down his trail and pay him for his life. One goes or all go."

His eyes dwelt on Rand, whose tiger-clawed leg had been reported to him. Then they shifted to Tim. Plainly he believed Rand to be the man most implicated in the death of his subject. Yet he obviously coveted the red man's hair, and hoped he might be the guilty one.

"You know the man who killed," he rasped. "Who is the man?"

For a moment there was silence. The three soldiers, who had fronted death many times on another continent; the outlaw, who lived by his own deadliness; the former Wild Dog of the Javary jungle, who had roved for years among violent endings of life—all searched the relentless visage of the chief. Through each man's mind went the same thought—that through the death of one the rest should live.

Moved by the same impulse, all stepped forward. Like one man all answered—

"I!"

CHAPTER X

RED SPOTS

FOR an instant every man of the five stood defiantly fronting the chief. Then each became aware of the fact that his comrades also had volunteered for death.

"Git back!" Tim muttered. "I'll take this on! Git——"

"It is mine!" hoarsely disputed José. "I am but an outlaw—let me——"

"You both shut up!" growled Knowlton. "I was there and you guys weren't——"

Rand cut short the tragic argument. He strode across the body, limped up to the chief, and nodded. The chief nodded in response. The Indian directness of the move went straight to his mind, and the steady green eyes convinced him that here was the right man.

Once more he spoke in the same harsh monotone. As before, the interpreter translated:

"The sun of today sinks. Those who live shall see more suns rise. This man shall see one sun. While the stars shine you shall stay there."

The chief pointed to one of the mud hovels. Without another word he went back into the big house.

Forthwith the five were herded to the designated hut. At its entrance the leader halted them. At a word from him each man's belt was unbuckled and, with its weapons dangling from it, taken away. Then, still bound, they were shoved into the dank interior.

Leaving four warriors on guard outside the door, the rest went back to the tribe-house and busied themselves carrying in the loot. Until it was all transported, the dead man lay stark and still on the ground. Then two men grasped the litter and carried it away toward the rear of the place.

"Thought so," nodded McKay, who had been coolly watching. "They found that fellow early and saved him for a third-degree stunt. Sent one gang up-river and the other down. They traveled fast, and the up-stream bunch caught us cold. The down-river detachment got back just before we came."

After eyeing the guards, who stood suggestively ready, he turned and looked about at the bare prison from which Rand was to go forth to death at the next sunrise. As a place of confinement it was almost ideal, at least from the standpoint of the jailers; for it had no windows, its roof was a solid sheet of sun-baked clay supported by pole rafters, and there was no possible means of exit except through the doorway, which could easily be blocked up and guarded. To men confined in it, however, it was a miserable hole—damp, clammy, unprovided with either conveniences or necessities. No

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hammocks, no water—nothing at all was in it except a small cracked clay jar in one corner.

"I don't think much of this town's guest-house," remarked Knowlton, sourly surveying the place.

"And the things I'm thinkin' about them guys that put us here ain't fit to eat," seconded Tim. "Now we're in the coop they might untie us, if nothin' more. Me hands are dead already from these ropes on me arms."

The others, with hands equally numb, nodded.

"They may cut us loose later," McKay encouraged. "If not, I'll do it."

"Huh? How?"

"Jack-knife. Got one here in my right pocket."

"Yeah? I got one too, but I dunno how to git to it with me hands tied like this."

"Simple enough. One of you fellows get a couple of fingers into my pocket and fish it out. We can open it somehow and cut one man's cords. Then he'll free the rest of us."

"Gosh, ye think of everything, don't ye, cap? That'll help a lot, and a smoke afterwards will help a lot more. Then mebbe we can dope out some way to git clear o' this place."

McKay made no answer to this. His glance strayed to Rand, who had sunk down against a wall and eased his aching leg out before him. Catching the look, Rand smiled somberly.

"This leg won't hurt me tomorrow at this time, Rod," he said.

Black scowls met his stoic jest. Think as they might, none could see any possibility of evading the executioner at dawn. But none would admit it.

"*Por Dios*, I would not be too sure of that, Señor Dave," protested José. "We have all night to work ourselves out of this place, even though they will bar the door. And if I can once get at the guards with cold steel——"

He threw his head back and dropped his jaw in grisly suggestion of a man with throat cut.

But Rand only shook his head slightly and contemplated the opposite wall. One by one the others sank down beside him and silently stared at the same wall, thinking, thinking, thinking—but seeing no hope.

"If ye'd stayed where ye was, Dave, 'stead o' walkin' right up the chief's stummick, ye'd be safe now," Tim asserted morosely. "He wants this red mop o' mine in his corset. Dang it, why didn't ye keep quiet?"

"Why didn't *you* keep quiet?" countered Rand. "I'm the logical candidate anyway. I jumped that Indian in the tree. Merry only fell on top of us, and you three weren't there at all. Besides, I haven't any folks up home, and I'm crippled for a while with this leg, and—well, I'm the goat. Now shut up. There's no more to say."

Tim growlingly subsided. For some time all sat wordless, moving only to ease their positions. Outside the guards stood watching steadily through the open doorway, and other tribesmen came, stood, stared, grunted among themselves, and went away. The sun-shadows, already long, slid faster and faster to the eastward as the earth rolled toward darkness. Within the house the dimness shaded into dusk.

At length Knowlton hitched forward, got to his knees, and heaved himself up.

"Guess I can get that knife when you're ready, Rod," he said. "My hands aren't quite so numb now. I've been holding my wrists close together to ease the cords."

"Wait for dark. We're watched too closely now."

The blond man began pacing up and down. After a few turns he approached the cracked pot, kicked it out where the light was a little better, and peered at it.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Dried blood!"

He gave it one more kick, knocking it back to the wall. It struck sharply and broke into chunks. One of them spun against José. The bushman glanced at it, then bent and looked closely.

"Not blood," he corrected. "It is too red. This is an old pot of *anatto* dye, which they use to color their red loin-cloths."

Yawning, he got up and strode to the doorway. The guards drew together and fronted him with weapons ready.

"Oh, do not fear, poor little ones," sneered the outlaw. "I will not attack you—not yet. I want water. Water, you fools! My throat is parched."

The Indians made no response. They only watched uncomprehending.

"*Agua!*" roared José. "Water! You wood-heads, you rocks— *Agua!*"

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From a group near the door of the big house came the leader of the gang which had caught them.

"*Agua!*" yelled José again. "Water, and food too! Will you starve us and choke us with thirst? *Agua! Carne!*"

The advancing Indian scowled at the imperious tone. But, after a gesture with one finger, he grunted something to another man near by. The man went along the curving wall of the tribe-house and barked something at women near a rear door. Presently several women approached, bearing clay jars and platters.

Reaching the guards, they stopped and stared fearfully at the gaunt red-capped outlaw, who still stood scowling in the doorway. They were young and good-looking, as light-skinned as their men, clothed only in short hip-bands of the red fiber-cloth worn by the warriors; but José showed them scant courtesy.

"Make haste!" he snarled. "We do not want to look at you, but to eat and drink. Come here!"

Instead, they retreated. The Indian leader spoke curtly. They hastily put down their burdens and fled back to the rear door. Men came forward and carried the victuals into the prison-pen.

"How are we to eat without hands?" demanded José. "Are you afraid to untie us even when we are penned up and without weapons? You are brave! *Sí!*"

The commander scowled again. Then his eyes fastened on something peeping over the Peruvian's waist-band. In two steps and a clutch he had it—a hidden knife, whose hilt had worked up into view unnoticed by its owner.

Without a word he turned the chagrined outlaw around and cut his bonds. Then, with a sneering smile, he threw the knife down and stalked out.

With a muttered oath, José worked his stiffened fingers a minute or two, then picked up the keen weapon in mingled relief and rage—the rage due to the contemptuous manner in which the Indian had answered his taunt. Outside, the savage watched, then spoke:

"Eat well. When you are on the wheel you will not feast. Use your knife to kill yourself tonight if you will. It may be better for you."

While José stared at him he strode away.

IN LESS than half a minute the floor was littered with severed cords, the Americans were rubbing their numbed hands together, and José's knife had vanished into its secret sheath. In another minute all were squatting in jungle style around the food and water. The bill of fare was fish, fruit, and meat—the first two sweet and fresh, the meat offensive to both nose and palate. However, the meat went the way of the rest; and when José, with an ironical bow to the guards, put the dishes outside the door they were bare.

"I notice they keep speaking of a wheel," remarked Knowlton, when his cigaret was going. "Seems to be something unpleasant."

"I believe the old Spanish Inquisition had a wheel," suggested McKay.

"Umph! Hope it's nothing like that. Besides, that fellow promised no torture. What do you make of it, José, and of these people?"

"Of the wheel I make nothing, *señor*. I can not guess what it may be. Of the people I make only this: They are not shrinkers of heads, unless the heads are kept in the big house, which may be possible. We have seen none. At the same time they have the Jivero custom of keeping the women apart from the men; there is a separate door at the rear for them. They are like Jiveros in some ways, unlike them in others—keeping us alive, for one. They have not been here many months; their big house is too new. If I could have my way they would not be here one hour longer, but in ——."

"Yeah. Ye said a mouthful that time," contributed Tim. "But wishin' don't git us nothin'. If it did I'd wisht for one o' them diseases they're so scairt of. I bet if we broke out with smallpox or measles or somethin' over night they'd knock down the whole jungle runnin' away from us. Hullo, here comes more trouble."

A dozen men were coming across the stumpy clearing, bearing spears and short but heavy logs. The prisoners arose and stood alert—Tim with fists shut, José with a hand on his knife, McKay and Rand feeling for clasp-knives in their pockets, Knowlton holding a jagged section of the shattered dye-pot. But none of the Indians entered the hut. They dropped their logs at the doorway. Two more came up with stout poles.

While the prisoners watched, the poles

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were set into deep holes at each side of the doorway. The log sections were piled on one another, between poles and wall, across the entrance. In a few minutes the doorway was blocked by a solid wall of logs reaching from the ground to within a hand's breadth of the top, where a small opening was left to admit air. Then came sounds of men, walking on the low roof, and the barrier which had hung outward a little against the poles, was forced back tight against the door-edges as if drawn by ropes around the uprights.

"Crude jail door but mighty effective," commented Rand. "They've roped it back against a big tree just behind here. It would take us a week to break out."

As if in answer, through the air-hole came the warning voice of the Spanish-speaking Indian.

"Men watch through the night. They kill if this wall moves."

No answer came from the prisoners, who now stood in dense gloom. Voices grunted outside, and a whiff of smoke drifted in. Almost at once the last sunlight vanished from the farther jungle. The night noise of animals and frogs broke out. Through the air-hole a yellowish light glimmered and the hiss of flames sounded. The guards had started a protective fire and were settling themselves for their vigil until dawn.

"Well," came Rand's unemotional voice, "guess I'll curl up for a good sleep."

"Wait a minute," shot Knowlton, a quiver in his tone. "Thanks to Tim, I have an idea. Thanks to a chafed knee, I have a little can of talcum powder in my pocket. Thanks to luck, we have water and some dried *anatto* dye. Rod, is your flashlight in your shirt pocket as usual?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Here's why. Those fellows outside are dead afraid of disease. Now listen hard."

His voice mumbled rapidly for a minute. Then sounded a subdued chorus of approval.

"*Por Dios*, it will do!"

"By cripes, ye got the right dope, looey!"

"Good head, Merry. We'll try it out."

José stole to the door and, through the air-slit, watched the guards at their fire. The others huddled in a corner, where, in the white sheen of the little electric ray, they worked with powder and moistened dye. They worked slowly and with extreme care. At length McKay strode to José and muttered:

"All right. Your turn next."

The outlaw stepped to the corner, and the tall captain stood guard at the slit. For a while longer the white light in the corner burned. Then it winked out.

"All set, Rod," said Knowlton. "We can turn in now."

The five stretched themselves on the floor.

The night wore on. To the ears of the squatting guards came the roars of prowling *tigres*, the howls of *cotomonos*, the other night noises of the tropic forest. But from the prison came no sound.

At length two of them arose, advanced with a torch, narrowly inspected the log wall, listened, passed around the house, looked at the roof, listened again at the door. At that moment came a dread sound from within—groans of a man in deadly pain and sickness. Followed other voices and a sound of water being poured. Then, except for more groans, all was still.

The pair stared soberly at each other. Then they slipped back to the fire and told their mates. None went near the door again. All watched it and listened.

Came a babbling voice, broken by louder groans and piteous appeals for water. Presently it rose to a shrill, terrible note like that of a death-scream. This was followed by an outbreak of exclamations, questions, calls to one who did not reply, scaling down into mumbling tones. Then came silence again.

The stars rolled westward. The dank chill of the hours before dawn made the guards shiver and draw close to the fire. At last a wan light came into the sky, brightening fast. The animal world roused itself to its daybreak clamor. The door of the tribe-house opened. Men emerged and the guards rose to meet them.

They grunted rapidly, pointing to the clay prison. A worried scowl came on the faces of their auditors, among whom was the leader who spoke Spanish. After a moment's hesitation he walked to the mud house and ordered the others to release the door. As quickly as possible they obeyed, pulling out half of the logs. Then they retreated.

Beyond the logs still standing, the leader saw only dimness. He stepped closer and leaned inside. For a moment he stood petrified. Then he sprang back.

Rigid on the floor before him lay the man who was to have been executed that

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morning. His jaw hung slack. His upturned face was ghastly with the pallor of death. And against that awful pallor stood out a thick sprinkling of malevolent reddish spots.

CHAPTER XI

THE LOOTER

A HOLLOW groan echoed out from the dank pen.

Before the starting eyes of the Indians, a white man came reeling from a dark corner at the rear—the tall black-bearded one. His groan was echoed by another, and a second figure staggered into sight—the blond man with the bandaged head. Both were blanched and haggard of face. And on each of those faces, on their necks and on their arms as well, flamed virulent spots far more red and appalling than those of the corpse.

They lurched to the doorway and hung there, staring glassily. Hoarsely they begged:

"*Agua!* Water—for the dying!"

Frozen, dry-mouthed, the savages stood staring speechless at the frightfully diseased creatures who yesterday had been strong men.

"*Agua!*" croaked the pair again.

Then, with the desperation of beings already doomed, they came crawling over the logs and lunged straight at their captors, reaching for them with the malignantly spotted hands. Behind them appeared two more men—the red-headed one and the hawk-faced Spaniard—and on them too glared the blotches of deadly contagion.

In that instant the wild men of the jungle ceased to be men. They became screaming creatures bereft of sense and reason by frenzied fear. From bullets, from cold steel, from poisoned arrows or spears they would not have retreated an inch; but from those lunging, reaching corpses whose touch meant hideous death to all their tribe—they recoiled, collided, struck and clawed one another, fought madly to get away, and, shrieking, bolted for their tribal house.

But that house, a fortress against jungle enemies, was no defense against the dread thing pursuing them now. Somehow the dying men found the strength to run after them, treading close on their flying heels and reaching, reaching, reaching for them, grinning horribly as they sped. There was no time to throw the stout door of their home into place and bar out those awful creatures. Before they could even struggle through the opening the two foremost pursuers got their clammy clutches on three or four of them—clutches which did not hold, but which froze their hearts with insane terror.

Screeching like lost souls harried through Hades by malicious demons, they fought through the portal and ran madly on toward the door connecting the quarters of the warriors with those of the women. To their horror-struck fellows they gasped the frightful news as they fled. Paralyzed for an instant, those who heard the fatal tidings gaped at the doorway and saw the red-spotted apparitions coming relentlessly on. The wave of fear which had swept the first fugitives into flight engulfed them also. The big house became a chaos of frenzied men.

The chief himself, standing beside his hammock with a throwing-spear poised for attack, was caught in the mob-terror sweeping the place. For a minute he stood his ground, fighting against the chill that enwrapped his heart. If the advancing dead-alive men had hesitated he would have held his position, hurling one javelin after another at them. But they did not hesitate, did not waver.

With inexorable tread they came straight at him, grinning those grisly grins, stretching out hands empty but more menacing than if they held weapons.

His hollow eyes darted aside. His mouth writhed in repulsion. With a choking grunt he hurled his spear at the black-bearded specter in the lead. McKay, watching keenly, lurched aside. The missile flew wild. The chief spun about and leaped headlong away toward the thin partition beyond which were the women's quarters.

Under the weight of the men hurling themselves at the one small door, that partition caved in and collapsed. Among its fragments the howling mob struggled, fell, scrambled up and dashed on toward the exit, already jammed with women shrieking and clawing their way out. For a moment or two a panic-stricken maelstrom swirled about that door. Then at last, bruised and scratched and bleeding, the whole tribe was outside and rushing for the shelter of the forest.

Had any of them paused to look back

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toward the mud prison, he would have seen a thing which either might have restored his reason or knocked the last vestige of sense out of his quivering brain. There among the stumps, half-way across the clearing and heading for the tribe-house, was swiftly creeping a fifth red-spotted man—the dead man who had lain just within the doorway when the logs were taken down; the man who was to have borne the vengeance of the tribe for the death of the hunter. But none paused. Men, women, children, old and young, strong and weak, all tore for the protecting labyrinth of tree and bush. And the dead man reached the house and vanished.

Within the doorway, Rand found a scene of wreckage which suggested the devastation of an exploding shell. Hammocks were torn down, weapons lay scattered over the floor, clay cooking-vessels were overturned and shattered, the débris of the partition jutted in jagged segments, and smoke from the newly lit breakfast-fires drifted over all. In the midst of it he saw his comrades, grouped at the chief's hammock, swiftly buckling on their weapon-belts, gathering up their rifles and axes and hammocks, stuffing into pockets and shirts small parts of their plundered equipment which could be carried away without hampering their movements. As fast as he could he limped to them.

"Here's Dave!" rumbled Tim. "Hullo, ye dog-gone stiff! Who said ye could come alive? Don't ye know ye croaked with smallpox last night? Wal, now shake a leg. We got to move, double time."

The green-eyed man was moving already. In a few fleeting seconds he was belted and armed like the rest.

"Hate to leave so much of our duffle," grumbled Knowlton, "but we have to flit from this festive scene while the flitting is good, and pack-animals are bum flitters. If we can get back to the canoes we'll find our cans of grub and cartridges there, anyhow."

"*Si*," grinned José, "and if these *Indios* follow us there they will soon learn that I told no lie when I said those bullet-tins were filled with quick death. And when they return here they will find none of our plunder waiting for them. If we cannot have it they shall not. Hold my rifle a moment."

With which he snatched blazing sticks from the chief's fire and bounded to the smashed partition. Swiftly he worked along the débris, firing it in a dozen places. It flamed up instantly, the blaze crawling rapidly up to the tindery palm-thatch roof.

"An affectionate *adios* to the gentleman who advised me to kill myself before morning," he chuckled, loping back. "Now outside, comrades, *desde luego!* If we go quickly we may go unseen. They ran into the bush at the rear—we go out at the front—the house hides us. Come!"

Out to the entrance they strode. A quick glance around, and they struck for the path, which opened ahead. At every step they expected to hear a yell from the jungle behind, announcing that they had been sighted. But none came.

INTO the bush they plunged. There, for the space of one brief glance, they paused to look back. Already the tribe-house was vomiting black clouds from roof and doors. Up from the smoke-hole at the peak darted a flare of flame. Even if the whole tribe should rush back to it now, it was doomed. So was any man who dared to enter it.

"José, take the lead," commanded McKay. "Dave, you march second. Tim and Merry, follow in file. March!"

Thus, in four crisp sentences, he arranged his little command in the most effective order: The veteran bushman as guide, the injured man where his bad leg would not compel him to fall behind the rest, and the bulk of his fighting force instantly available for rearguard action. McKay, in the post of danger, strode behind, keeping a watchful eye and ear open toward the rear.

For a time all forged ahead in silence, José picking the dim trail with unerring eye, Rand stoically hobbling onward at good speed, Tim and Knowlton careful not to crowd their lame comrade. Presently Knowlton began to chuckle.

"Did it work?" he exulted. "Oh, boy! We sure must be a handsome gang of corpses, from the reception we got. Dave, you missed the best show of your life."

"Didn't miss much," Rand denied. "Sat up and watched you chase them into the house. Saw them come yelping out of the back door, too. Finest free fight I ever clapped an eye on."

"Yeah," assented Tim. "I dang near laughed out loud when they busted right through the wall. Seemed like I was back

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home watchin' a movie show. Gosh, I'll be glad when I can wash this powder off me face. I feel like a chorus girl."

"Silence in the ranks!" snapped the captain.

But his mouth twitched as the ludicrous side of it struck him too. Again he saw the chief turn tail and fight madly with his own men in flight from four faces whitened with talcum and dotted with harmless dye-spots. And as he caught a subdued humming from Tim and recognized the air he laughed silently. The ex-sergeant was softly singing to himself an army tune beginning:

One battalion jumped right over the other battalion's back——

But the smile vanished in a flash, and he wheeled. Muffled, almost deadened by the intervening jungle, a roar of raging yells sounded back at the clearing where the tribe-house now must be a belching furnace. The Indians had returned to their toppling stronghold.

"Sounds like the beginning of another party," muttered Knowlton, inching back his breech-bolt to make sure his gun still was loaded.

"Uh-huh. But they sure are crazy if they foller us up," said Tim. "They ain't got nothin' to fight with but hands and teeth. They dropped everything when they made their getaway, and all their weapons are burnt. We could easy massacree the whole layout."

For the first time the full extent of José's revenge on the Indians dawned on the rest. He had not merely burned their house; he had plunged the whole tribe into the most abject poverty, if not into actual tragedy. They were without shelter, save for the few small, wretched clay huts; without food except for the products of the plantation which they had trampled down in their flight; without weapons, in a savage jungle where weapons meant life. True, they could exist, and no doubt would exist, until they could rehabilitate themselves. But for a time they would be virtually at the mercy of any fate that came their way, and for a longer time they would be a weak, disorganized tribe.

"Guess their morale has suffered a severe jolt," McKay summarized it. "But they'll make it hot for us if they can."

And there was no relaxing of alertness as the little column went on. All knew that they left behind them a plain trail; that soon the absence of the dead man and the presence of the telltale broken dye-pot would be discovered; that somewhere an unbroken bow and a few arrows might yet remain; and that only five arrows, skilfully shot, were needed to wipe out their whole party. Wherefore silence and vigilance again ruled.

But whatever the furious white Indians may have thirsted to do was not done. The adventurers, once more doggedly heading toward the mysterious cordillera to the north, wound steadily onward without attack. They passed from the creek into the streamless shadows, through them to the water-gleams of the river, up along the Tigre Yacu to the first rocks, where yesterday they had found gold and capture. Today, at the same spot, they found something equally unexpected.

Approaching it, they heard sounds which at first seemed to be the recurrent murmur of the water. A few rods farther on, they slowed and listened hard; for now the mutter seemed to be that of voices. José, scowling, slipped on ahead, motioning to the rest to wait. Hardly had he disappeared among the trees when an unmistakable noise broke through the curtain of brush—the thump of a heavily laden tin container.

"By cripes, some more guys are at our stuff!" fiercely whispered Tim. "Lemme git by, Dave. I'll learn 'em somethin', the mutts!"

Rand, however, declined to yield his place or to be hurried. Despite his injury, he was creeping forward with the old stealth that had been his when he was the Wild Dog of the Javary. Tim swallowed his impatience and trailed him in silence, Knowlton and McKay close behind.

The thumping sound came again, and with it a voice that seemed oddly familiar, speaking Spanish. In it was a note of malicious joy, with an undertone of fear.

"So the illustrious gentlemen have gone to the —— as they said they would. Ha! Ha! 'A quick voyage to you,' I said, and so it was. My polite *señores*, I trust that now you roast comfortably in ——. Ha, ha! Quick, you clumsy *ladroncillo!* Take this one also. *Los Indios blancos*—the white Indians—may be close to us."

Another bump. Then the sarcastic voice of José:

"For your good wishes I thank you,

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'Señor Bocaza' (Big Mouth). But I think it is you who goes to the ——."

With a rush the Americans emerged from the bush beside José. The Peruvian, with a leering grin, was sighting down the barrel of his rifle. On the river lay a newly arrived canoe—a two-man craft. In it, bending over with his hands on one of the American cases, stood the Indian whom José had chastised at San Regis. On the farther bank, clutching another case, his face blanched yellow-white, crouched the Moyobambino trader, Torribio Maldonado.

CHAPTER XII

DEATH PASSES

SHOCKED speechless, the rascally trader squatted rigidly for a moment, eyes and mouth gaping at the men whom he had just consigned to eternal torment. Then his lips moved.

"*Cien mil diablos!*" he gasped.

"Do you say so?" mocked José. "A hundred thousand *diablillos?* I did not know there were so many. I know only one—the great horned—of them all. The others must be mean little *diablillos* like yourself. If they are not too proud to associate with you they will soon have a new companion. How will you have your traveling ticket—in the head or the stomach?"

The yellow pallor of the other became ghastly. He tried to shrink behind the tin case, which was far too small to hide him.

"*San Pablo! Santo Tomás! Santa Ana!*" he mouthed.

Then, in desperation, he rose quivering to his feet.

"*Amigo mio,*" he whined, "I was but taking your goods to a safe place where the accursed *Indios* would not get them, and where I could start a party to search for you. I thought you were captured——"

"And so we were," taunted the outlaw. "Perhaps you stirred up those *Indios blancos* to hunt us down, yes? That would be a true Moyobamba trick."

"But no *Santo Domingo,* no! Never would I do such a thing. I am mad with joy to find you alive, *amigos!* Only put down that gun—it gives me a coldness in the middle, though I know you are only having your little joke—ha, ha! Only put down the gun, Don José."

José's eye flickered over his gun-sight. His trigger-finger tightened by a hair's weight. Then it loosened.

"Don José?" he purred menacingly. "What is the rest of the name, you who know so much?"

"Martinez. Oh, yes, I know you, Don José. Who has not heard of the famous——"

"Pah! Your lies and your flattery both sicken me! Once I was a don, a *caballero,* but you know nothing of those days. All you know is that I am a killer of men. Of *men,* not of whining pups. I will not waste a precious bullet on you. I will save it for an Indian, a snake, a monkey—something worth killing."

The menacing muzzle sank. But, as the Moyobambino began sidling toward his canoe, it rose again.

"Not so fast! Pick up that case under your hands and carry it into the San Regis canoe nearest you. Then carry all the others and pack them carefully, every one. If you miss one, you *ladrón,* or forget to take one out of your own boat, you go floating down the Tigre with a hole in your liver. Now work!"

The Señor Torribio Maldonado worked. Perspiring profusely, he packed those cases with faultless precision and extreme dispatch. Meanwhile the Americans, though watching appreciatively, kept their ears open for any sound from behind. None came.

"Shall we let him go, *capitan,* or take him with us?" queried José in an undertone. "We can use the pair of them for work-slaves and punish them well for sneaking after us in this way, and we shall know they stir up no danger behind us."

McKay studied him quizzically. The hard face of the descendant of the Conquistadores showed that he was not joking. Left to his own inclinations, he would make that pair sweat blood in the days to come.

"Don't want them," the captain refused. "More trouble than they're worth."

"I will see that they give no trouble," came the significant promise.

"So will I—by not having them around. I told you, back on the Marañon, that this fellow was your meat, but I'll take charge now."

"As you wish, *capitan.*"

McKay motioned, and his four mates went with him into the stream. Maldonado watched their approach with obvious

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misgiving, but he dared not attempt to flee. On the farther shore McKay faced him.

"You! Do you want to live?" he snapped. "If you—what's the matter with you?"

Maldonado had shrunk back, staring from face to face, a new terror in his eyes.

"*San Pedro!* The spots!" he breathed. "Your faces, *amigos*—your hands——"

"It is *la fiebre encarnada*—the red fever," interrupted José, grinning wickedly. "You do not know the red fever? No? We caught it among your friends the white Indians back yonder. They have it much worse than we. It drives men mad, Torribio. Those wild men were tearing their own house apart when we came away, they were so mad from the red spots. In a few hours we too may be crazed. Hah!"

He shot out one red-spotted hand and rubbed it over the Moyobambino's face. With a squeak of fear the wretch tripped backward, sprawled over the edge, soused into the water. He came up gasping and scrambled into his own canoe.

"Go!" rasped McKay, gritting his teeth to hold a stern face. "This is your last chance. Paddle hard to the great river and you may live. Otherwise——"

He paused. The trader, now all atremble between his fear of José, of the white Indians, and of this new disease of the river of evil repute, did not wait to hear what might happen otherwise. He went.

His canoe bumped between the boulders and fled downstream, the Indian and his master heaving it away with strokes that bent their tough paddles. Rapidly it diminished to a blot at the apex of twin angular ripples, the paddle-blades winking fast in the sunlight. Then it darted out of sight around a turn.

A chorus of chuckles sounded on the shore where the five watched the flight.

"And so the River of Missing Men sends back two more bold hearts," laughed Knowlton. "They'll have a brave tale to tell when they return to San Regis."

"The river has not yet returned them to that town," suggested Rand.

"'Meanin' they may git swallered by somethin' before they git clear?" guessed Tim. "Begorry, they might at that. If them white Injuns catch 'em foul they'll be out o' luck. Serves 'em good and right too, the dirty cache-robbers.

"I have a feeling, comrades, that we have not yet seen the last of that pair," José somberly stated. "I wish I had them under my thumb—or that my old rifle had accidentally exploded when it pointed at the Moyobambino. But they are gone, and we waste time here."

McKay nodded and gestured toward the canoes. With one more keen look at the surrounding bush and a swift survey to make sure nothing was overlooked on the ground, the voyagers returned to their respective boats. A little later the boulders around which had centered treasure-hunting, peril, capture, theft, mockery, and fear, were alone once more in a stretch of empty river.

A MILE upstream the five spotted men slowed their strokes. Before them rose more rocks. Like the first obstructions, however, they were few, and not high enough or close enough to cause much difficulty to canoes. But before traveling much farther every man needed to get into the tins which had just been saved from the clutches of the Moyobambino. Their stomachs were empty and their cartridges few.

So, beyond the boulders, they halted. José, watching the flat boxes of cartridges emerge from one of the ammunition tins, smiled wryly.

"I should have brought with me a tin box like yours, *amigos*," he said. "Or else I should have remembered to find some bullets before leaving our Indian friends. Now all the cartridges they took from me are exploded in the fire I set, and I have only five left in all the world. Señor Dave, you must make for me a bow and some arrows."

Rand smiled and shook his head.

"Not unless we've lost a can," he said. "Tim, is the forty-four tin still there?"

"Uh-huh. Safe and solid. Wait a minute, Hozy, old-timer, and I'll give ye all the cannon-balls ye want."

To the Peruvian's amazement and joy, he was speedily presented with a clean, dry carton of the heavy bullets that fitted his gun.

"Trade stuff," McKay explained. "We don't use forty-four calibre ourselves, but it's so commonly used in the jungle that we brought a batch of it over the Andes. Lots of times a few forty-four slugs will buy more than you could purchase with five times their value in money."

"True, *capitan*. And to me they are worth more than all the gold that may be

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ahead. Now that I have them, I am curious to know whether that path of the white Indians still follows this stream upward. So I will take a little walk over yonder while you open some food."

Dumping his ammunition into his capacious right-hand pocket, he shoved his canoe across the stream, clambered up the bank, and disappeared.

"Queer thing about that path," remarked Rand. "It's a good deal older than the clearing and the tribe-house of the Indians back yonder. Been here longer."

The others frowned thoughtfully. Their eyes, though experienced by previous jungle travel, were not trained to note the slight differentiations which were so obvious to the former wild man; but even they had noticed that the tribe-house seemed quite new. Now, while they labored with can-openers and gouged beef out of the cans, they pondered.

"Ol' Injun trail, prob'ly," hazarded Tim. "Been used a hundred years, mebbe, by the wild guys travelin' up and down."

"Quite likely. Wish my leg was in good hiking condition. I'd like to leave the canoes and hit the trail. It probably goes to where we're heading for, and canoeing will be work from now on."

"Yeah? 'Tain't been work up to here, o' course not. But I'm game to stick to these here dugouts a long while before I make meself an army jackass and buck the bush with tin cans hung all over me. That bush-whackin' don't make no hit with me nohow. Besides, we dunno if that path does go anywheres—might lead us right into some headhuntin' town. Nope, me for the river as long as she holds out. And I'm goin' t o use some of it right now."

Wherewith he began scrubbing the sweat-streaked talcum powder and the dye-spots from his face. The others followed his example—but not all at once. Rand and Knowlton waited, with hands on rifles and eyes scanning water- and tree-line, until the other two were through with their ablutions. Then they took their turn, while their clean-faced companions watched.

"Funny we don't hear nothin' from Hozy, cap," muttered Tim. "Thought he'd come right back."

McKay made no answer. But his eyes rested on the Peruvian's canoe, noting that its owner, with habitual caution, had left it under some drooping ferns which would mask it from above. Then they roved up the creeping water, pausing at a spot some rods farther on, where other ferns formed a good covert. As Rand and Knowlton lifted their wet faces he pointed upstream.

"We'll move up there," he said.

After a look at him and at the bank, the others dipped their paddles. The twin dugouts slid across and upward and floated under cover.

The lieutenant lifted inquiring brows, getting in return a noncommittal wave of the hand. For a little time all sat in silence. All at once Rand grew tense.

His fingers tightened over his rifle. He leaned a little forward, all his senses concentrated into listening. To the ears of the others came no new sound; no sound whatever, unless it was a barely audible rustle which held a moment, then died, like the soft sigh of a passing breeze. But Rand's head slowly turned, following that tiny murmur downstream. After it had died away he still held that alert poise.

Presently his gaze swung to the faces of his companions, who were watching him keenly. Soundlessly his lips formed one word—

"Men!"

McKay pointed a thumb backward, mutely asking if the men had gone down the river. The ex-roamer of the jungle nodded.

All watched toward the rocks below. No sight or sound of human life came. From where they lurked they could not see the empty canoe of José. In every mind grew the same question: What had become of him?

At length the question was answered. Stealthy dips of a paddle floated to them, and a ripple curved along the water. The bow of the outlaw's canoe appeared, hugging the shore. Above it moved a black-haired head, minus the piratical red handkerchief. Stroking carefully, José slipped up to them.

"*Por Dios*, you are wise, *capitan!*" he whispered. "You shifted in good time. I could not get back to warn you, and I have been sweating blood, expecting to hear you attacked.

"The path is there, *amigos*. It is close to the water here. And along it have just gone thirty Jiveros! The head-shrinkers!"

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CHAPTER XIII

FOLLOWED

McKAY reached to the newly opened ammunition tin.

Silently he extracted box after box of soft-ointed cartridges and passed them to his ompanions. With equal silence each of he Americans received the flat packets, lit the thin paper seals with a thumb-nail, urned back the covers, and placed the boxes n the bottoms of the canoes, the grim brass eads ready within instant reach. Boxes f forty-fives followed, and the spare clips f the belt-guns were given quick but horough inspection. Finally Tim beck-ned José closer, and, with a muffled grunt, ifted the entire case of forty-fours into he outlaw's craft.

"They're yourn," he stage-whispered.

The Peruvian made no reply in words, but is shining eyes spoke for him. So did the swift swoop of his hand into the tin and his affectionate gaze at the cartons of death-dealing cylinders he brought forth. But he wasted no time in gloating over his treasure. After exposing the shining discs and the dull gray leads to the sun he turned and watched downstream.

Minutes dragged away while the hidden five squatted under the ferns, holding the canoes motionless by gripping the bank, straining eyes and ears for sight of savage figures near the rocks or for any returning rustle. Then José let his gaze return to the opened beef-tins.

"I believe, *señores*, we halted here to eat," he suggested.

The broad hint met with immediate response. Hands relaxed from their grips on the guns, and the guns themselves were laid softly down. A minute later every one was wolfing food.

"No smoking," refused McKay, as Tim, after devouring his meat and gulping a gourd of river-water, reached for his "makings." The big freckled hand hesitated, then reluctantly came away from the shirt pocket.

"Dang it, I ain't had a drag since last night," grumbled the red man. "Say, are we goin' to keep duckin' and hidin' and goin' without smokes on account of a bunch o' bare-backed boobs like them there, now, Jiveros? Me, I don't like this scairt-cat stuff. Wade into 'em and blow 'em wide open if they git sassy; that's my idea."

"Same here, if it would get us anything," concurred Knowlton. "But until we find something worth fighting over, what's the use? Use your head a little if you want to keep it on your neck."

"Grrrumph!" growled Tim.

But his hand went now to his paddle, not to his tobacco.

"No use hangin' round here," he said. "Le's go."

And, after another look around, they went—slowly, stealthily, with open cartridge-boxes beside them and rifles close at hand, but steadily forging on up the forbidden water toward whatever lay beyond.

Though they now were afloat once more, they tacitly held to the same formation in which they had traveled the trail that morning: José in the lead, with Rand following in the bow of Tim's canoe, and the pair of ex-officers trailing. The two jungle veterans thus were where their keen senses were of most use, while the rest of the expedition was in position for quick action toward front or rear. Yet, for all their readiness, there seemed to be nothing to do but the everlasting paddling. Since the passing of that sinister rustle in the western bush no sight or sound of anything but animal or bird life had come to them.

As they went, the sharp eyes of McKay dwelt thoughtfully on Rand. He was pushing his paddle as stoically as ever, and to all appearances his stroke was as strong as if he had had both legs curled under him. But the captain knew well that the lacerated limb was aching, and that the forced journeys through the tangled forest had pulled the torn muscles apart and undone whatever good had been accomplished by the first rough-and-ready surgical attention.

He knew, too, that unless the claw-wounds were given a fair chance to heal there would be a cripple in his company for many days to come; and that the day might not be far off when, notwithstanding his dogged grit, that cripple's inability to handle himself with his normal ease might plunge the whole party into irretrievable disaster. Humanitarian reasons aside, it was imperative that the weak link in the chain be made strong again. Rand must lie up.

But he could not lie up in the moving canoe. Not only would this throw all the work of propelling that dugout on Tim, but if a real *mal-paso* should be encountered he would have to take to his legs with the

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rest while the boats were dragged and poled upward. Moreover, another band of savages using that hidden trail—or perhaps the same band returning—might at any time see and attack the expedition. Finally, the stubborn pride of the man himself would not let him rest unless the others halted also. Wherefore the only solution was to find a covert where a secret camp could be constructed and all hands could take a few days of ease.

So, saying nothing, the commander renewed his study of the slowly passing shores. Now and then he halted his paddle and scrutinized some indentation or dried-up brook-mouth; but only for a minute. The canoes crawled on for some distance before he saw what he sought.

Then, on the eastern shore, a fair-sized creek opened. After a quick survey McKay spoke to Knowlton, and the canoe surged ahead at double speed, closing in on José.

"Think we'll look at that creek," said the captain. "First, take another look at the trail—see if it's still there. Then hunt for another on the other shore."

The Peruvian swung his bow inward, picked a landing-spot, and slipped away among the leaves. Rand's eyes followed him. Knowlton's turned to McKay with a look of inquiry. The captain rolled a thumb toward Rand's back, then touched his own leg. The blond man's quick nod showed that his thoughts had been traveling the same channel.

José returned, reporting that the path still ran beside the water and that it showed no sign of use since the Jiveros had gone downstream. At once the canoes crossed and entered the creek. There José disappeared for a longer time, exploring the shores of the new stream. At length he stepped out of the tangle with news.

"There is no path here, at least near the water," he declared. "And this water is no real creek. It is only the outlet of a *lago*—how big I do not know, but only a little way up."

"All right. Let's inspect it."

The black eyes of the outlaw hung on the gray ones a moment, mutely puzzled. But he asked no question. Into his short craft he got, and up the almost motionless arm of water he led the way. He knew his *capitan* well enough to realize that this was no thoughtless waste of time and effort. Tim and Rand, too, wondered but held their tongues.

The waterway curved from northeast to north, cutting off all view of the Tigre Yacu. Only a few hundred yards from the river it opened into a lake, perhaps a mile long, rimmed with wide sandy shores from which rose stiff slopes of heavy timber. Nowhere on its placid bosom nor on its gleaming sands showed any sign of humanity.

"Will do," McKay asserted.

"For what?" demanded Rand.

"For a hangout," enlightened Knowlton.

"What's the big idea?" Tim wanted to know.

"Here you can smoke," said McKay, his face relaxing.

"Huh? Say, I'll do that li'l thing right now!"

And in three-fifths of a second the tobacco-hungry paddler's pouch was in service.

"We'll lie up here a few days," McKay went on. "A little rest will do us all good."

"And that ain't no lie," affirmed Tim. "But what makes ye so merciful all to once? Got religion or somethin'?"

"Look here, Rod, am I holding the gang back?" Rand sharply asked. "If that's your idea I won't——"

"Yes, you will," McKay coolly contradicted. "You'll stick with the gang, and the gang halts here."

"But——"

"No argument, Dave. Your leg's bad. It's got to get well as fast as possible. We want no lame ducks. You've got to lie up."

"And eat up all our grub——"

"We'll get more grub here. Turn the little twenty-two gun loose on monkeys, jerk the meat, save our canned stuff. May lay in a stock of fish, too. There's plenty of salt."

"*Si*," José approved, scanning the sandy shores. "And this sand should be full of *tortuga* eggs. The water must hold many fish. Those heavy woods beyond will mean easy hunting and good hiding. You could not have chosen a better place, *capitan*."

Rand's mouth remained set, but he was silenced. Tim, with a sidelong wink at Knowlton, shoved on his paddle, and the Rand-Ryan boat moved onward. After a few more strokes from the stern Rand began to ply his own blade.

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A LITTLE way down, on the right shore, a sandy spit ran out into the water. Beyond it the five found a small cove. There they ran the canoes aground, and José and Tim were first to debark.

José, as scout, stepped off across the sand toward the steep bluff which, in the wet season, evidently formed the rim of the lake, but which now was some fifty yards distant. But he did not step far. All at once he bounded into the air, whirling like a cat, and ran for the lake. Knee-deep in the water he stopped, spluttering a hodge-podge of Spanish, Indian, and English profanity.

"What the—" Tim began.

Then he sharply picked up one booted foot, hopped off the other as if stung, caught his balance, and rushed to join José.

"Holy sufferin' cats!" he blurted. "This is some swell place ye picked out, cap! Ouch! Oo-ee! Cripes, I bet me boots are gone!"

The three still in the boats stared up the sand. From it radiated intense heat, but nothing moved on it.

"What's the matter?" demanded Knowlton.

"Matter! Git ashore and ye'll find out! That there stuff ain't jest sand. It's the top lid o' ——!"

"Oh. Hot, eh?"

"Hot! Aw, no! Git out and set down on it a few minutes, looey. G'wan! Ye dassn't!"

"You're right. I dassn't," grinned the lieutenant. "Sorry, José. You must have caught it badly with no boots on."

José, with lurid emphasis, assured him that he was burned to the bones. But after the water had cooled his suffering feet he flashed a grin.

"I wish, *amigos*, I had my Moyobambino pet here now," he chuckled. "I would ride on his back. How he would prance! Hah!"

"Mebbe he's dead already, and them hundred thousand friends o' his have lit extry bonfires to welcome him," suggested Tim. "Anyways, this sure is the upper crust o' his Winter home. Me, I'm goin' somewheres else."

He wallowed into his canoe, where he stared at his boots as if astonished to find them still on his feet. José also tugged his bow off the sand and stepped in.

"It is the sun," he explained. "On a cloudy day, or in the morning, one could walk here without trouble; but not now. All sand soaks up sun-heat, but some sand is worse, and this is the worst I ever met. If we stay in this place we must find a shorter way to the trees. There is one, on the other side. See."

Following his pointing finger, the rest saw a spot where a deep indentation gave a water-path to within a few yards of the tree-growth. Pushing out, they passed over to it. The water shoaled to finger-depth at a distance of ten feet or more from the edge of the beach, making a poor landing; but the space of hot sand intervening was only a few yards wide, and with boots wet it could be traversed without much discomfort. So there they debarked.

McKay and Knowlton loped across the sand to the bush, arriving with feet hot but not painful. A short scout revealed nothing but animal sign. Returning, they brought strips of flexible but tough bark and some bush-cord, which they presented to José. The Peruvian, sitting in the water, fell to work binding the bark to his feet as protective coverings to his tender soles. Tim and Rand after a thorough soaking of their boots, made a quick trip arm-in-arm across the hot space. Then Tim returned, picking up his feet with unusual spryness.

Half an hour later a camp had been made at a little distance from the entry-cove and skilfully camouflaged with big leaves, and to it all the outfit except the canoes themselves was transported. Later on, when the sand could be crossed with impunity, the boats would be shifted to a better berth; but now they were left stranded in the shallows. Rand's leg was dressed anew by Knowlton, who was more deft at such work than the others, and he lay in his hammock, solacing himself with a cigaret.

Then, all at once, the hand holding the cigaret stopped in air. Into his face came that look of concentrated listening. José, too, turned from something he was doing and cocked an ear toward the river. The others glanced at one another and stood motionless.

The Peruvian shot a look at Rand. Then he picked up his gun and vanished among the trees. To the waiting four presently came a sound—a swishing, pelting sound which grew into a murmur, as if men were running and breathing in hoarse gasps.

A sudden near rustle, and José burst out of the forest.

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"Peace is not for us, *amigos*," he panted, with a hard grin. "That tribe of accursed white Indians is coming!"

CHAPTER XIV

BURNING SANDS

"AW, RATS!" snorted Tim, seizing his rifle. "There ain't no rest for the wicked, as the feller says. Jest when we git comfortable them guys horn in again. This ain't goin' to be no fun, neither—not unless they've dug up weapons somewheres. Too much like killin' sheep."

The other Americans too, though swift to arm themselves, scowled as if facing a disagreeable task. Not so José. His pride still rankled at the memory of having been trapped so easily and driven like a beast to a mud pen, and now, finger on trigger, he looked vengefully back as if awaiting the appearance of that leader who had flung his knife so contemptuously on the floor and invited him to commit suicide.

When that leader did come loping into sight, however, the Peruvian stood stock still. The Indian was weaponless and was darting glances from side to side like a hunted thing; he was followed by gasping women and children.

At sight of the five whites aligned beside their hidden hut and the five deadly muzzles menacing his breast he stopped as if shot. The running horde behind struck him and knocked him forward, reeling and clutching for support. One hand caught a tree and saved him from sprawling. He snarled something over his shoulder. The human herd slowed to a halt.

For a second the women and children stared at the hard, bearded faces fronting them—faces now without a vestige of the horrible pallor and virulent spots which had been there that morning. Then their heads turned back, and from them broke whimpers of terror. Behind them sounded the hoarse voices of their men, urging them on. But again the leader snarled, and instead of surging forward they passed back his words.

"You fools!" McKay rasped. "Why do you follow us?"

"We do not follow," the Spanish-speaking Indian retorted. "We seek safety for our women and children. Death comes behind."

"What death?"

"The men who shrink the head. They found us helpless. They follow to take our heads and our women. Let us pass on. Or kill us quickly before they come."

He glanced back, but his face held no fear. He seemed only coolly gaging the pursuit. When he turned again his eyes held a malevolent glow, and the thin smile glimmered across his mouth.

"We can not live," he ground out. "But you who destroyed us go to death with us. Your heads hang with ours. *Bueno.*"

Though he spoke an alien tongue, the women behind moaned as if they understood; as if they were visioning the massacre of their men and their own slavery among captors who would treat them like animals and mock them with the grotesque heads of their mates. At that sound the hard-set faces of the five turned harder. Even José, looking at the children, clenched his teeth.

Every man of them knew the Jiveros were inveterate polygamists; that their killings were actuated even more by greed for woman slaves than by cupidity for the grisly trophies of war; that it would be more merciful to shoot down these women and girls now than to let them fall into such hands. They knew, too, that the Indian spoke truth when he cast on their shoulders the blame for the present defenselessness of his people, and that he voiced no idle threat when he predicted doom for all.

"By cripes, I don't care what happens to these guys—they would have killed Dave," Tim blurted. "But the women and kids——"

McKay's voice cut in.

"Do as I say and you may live. Run on a little way. Turn to the water and run back through the trees at the edge. Do not step on the sand until you see us at our canoes. Come to us there. We will fight for you. Quick! Go!"

The other's mouth twisted in disbelief. These gun-bearers, who had been their prisoners, would fight for them? No hope of that! But, as drowning men clutch at straws, he grasped at even that hopeless chance. As the imperative commands snapped in his ears and the guns sank he bounded forward. Automatically he obeyed McKay's pointing finger, indicating the rear of the hut. Around the shelter he plunged, pressed close by the fugitives blindly following his lead.

"José! Get back and watch for Jiveros!"

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arked McKay. "When you see them don't
oot—run back here. Dave, hop to the
noes! Tim—Merry—bear a hand on these
ses! Snap into it!"

Without a pause to watch the passing
orde he leaped into the hut and clutched
couple of heavy containers, with which he
lowed toward the canoes. Hard on his
eels came his two able-bodied mates, each
arrying all he could snatch and hold.
and, lugging the rifles, limped rapidly in
heir wake.

Meanwhile José, slipping swiftly along the
isordered column, found himself obliged
o draw off to one side if he was to
py Jiveros instead of fighting his recent
aptors. The women and children, ob-
essed by fear, gave him hardly a passing
lance. But the men, following behind in
osition to do their desperate best when the
ursuers should overtake them, saw in him
he living reason why they now were fleeing
nstead of battling their foes with gun and
pear and bow.

They did not know he was truly the man
vho had thought of destroying their fortress
nd had put that thought into execution; if
hey had, not all the head-hunters in the
ungle would have kept them from hurling
hemselves on him with their only weapons
—bare hands or crude clubs wrenched from
prone trees. Even as it was, the bold stare
nd mocking grin of the outlaw enraged
hem to the point of striking at him if he
ame within reach. So, keeping in mind
nis duty, he gave them plenty of room and
ped on to the rear.

There, last of all, he found the chief,
oping onward with frequent backward
ooks and grimly clutching a formidable
ree-branch. Coward though he might have
been that morning when confronted by
dread specters of disease, he now was all
man, guarding the exodus of his fallen tribe
and holding himself ready to fight and fall
first when the relentless death behind should
strike. And the outlaw, reading his face,
ceased grinning and gave the ruler a friendly
nod. His answer was a hollow-eyed glare.

The retreating line faded away. The
Peruvian posted himself behind a tree at the
edge of the new trail and waited.

Back at the canoes, the Americans
dropped their burdens and shoved the dug-
outs into water deep enough for floating.
McKay glanced along the bank. A short
distance farther on a bush swayed sharply,
struck by a speeding foot. The Indian had
obeyed orders, turned, and started back just
at the edge of the sand.

"Time for one more load," the captain
judged. "Merry and Tim, back to the hut!
Dave, hold her ready to go. I'll have to
boss this gang."

The blond and the red man, without their
rifles but with pistol-holsters unbuttoned,
raced back across the burning sands. They
had hardly disappeared into the bush when
the head of the Indian line broke out be-
hind them. McKay beckoned imperatively.
The leader made straight for him.

He was half-way across the hot grit before
his face contracted with pain. But his stride
never wavered; he only jumped ahead like
a spurred horse. A couple of seconds later
he was ankle-deep in the cooling water and
barking at the women, who had begun to
cry out and hesitate on the scorching sur-
face. Between the goad of his voice and
the momentum of the following mass, the
waverers were propelled onward into the
shallow water-lane.

The whole column followed fast. Soon all
the fugitives were packed together in the
inlet, and the grim chief was forcing his
way through to learn from the young guide
why they were here in the open, easy prey
to the impending attack.

The guide had halted beside McKay and
demanded the same information. Was this
a cruel white-man trap, calculated to de-
stroy their last chance of life? He snapped
the question with savage brevity. With
equal curtness McKay snapped back at him
the answer to the riddle.

Sudden hope flared in the tawny eyes
watching his. As the chief reached him and
growled a wrathful query he translated the
white man's talk into the Indian tongue.
The tribal ruler, his feet still hot, threw a
quick look at the sand, another at the point
in the bush where the tribe had doubled on
its trail, and a third at the water-line
stretching away. Then his hard gaze bored
into McKay's face.

"You are at our backs," he pointed out,
his voice rough with hostile suspicion.
"Your guns at our backs, Jiveros at our
faces."

"I know it, you fool!" shot the captain.
"I will do what I say. Take it or leave it.
We go."

At that moment Knowlton and Tim came
careering out with more cans. They jostled

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past, thumped their burdens into the canoes, and hopped in after them.

"Better beat it, Rod!" called Knowlton. "José coming?"

"Not yet, but time's short. Where do we go from here?"

"Hold up a minute." Then, to the chief: "Your life or death are in your own hands. Do as you wish."

With which he shouldered his way out of the press, ran to his canoe, jumped in, and commanded—

"Paddle!"

The two dugouts slid outward, leaving the little canoe of José empty and waiting. A couple of young bucks grabbed it. McKay dropped his paddle inboard and swung on them with rifle aimed.

"Hands off!" he barked. "The man taking that canoe dies!"

The guide and the chief grunted together. The pair lifted their hands from the canoe and sullenly swung toward their commanders. At once the chief began loping outward, feet in the water, at the very edge of the sand. The rest followed.

At the mouth of the inlet the canoes swerved to the left and glided along the lake, near shore. At the same point the chief turned and ran on in the same direction. A short distance up-lake the boats slowed and stopped. The fugitives, following, splashed up to them, still only ankle-deep. The chief halted and gave gruff orders.

His people drew together, standing at the water-line, facing the jungle, which seemed to quiver in the heat-waves ascending from the intervening sand. Behind them the canoes crept up and grounded.

"Here's the dope," McKay explained. "Jiveros, following trail, turn at that place over yonder. Trail runs back along shore. But they see their victims out here, unarmed, helpless, making a last stand. Naturally they don't loop back along the shore-line—they come straight out to get these fellows. They don't see us. Between them and us are forty yards of blistering sand. By the time they——"

"Here's Hozy!" Tim broke in.

JOSÉ was dashing at top speed from the tree-line. He tore across the sand, bounded through the water, leaped in air and alighted in his canoe with a fierce down-drive of the legs that shot the craft outward and sat him down hard in the same instant. His paddle darted out and lashed the water in tremendous strokes even before he got to his knees. Thereafter he fairly lifted the boat along toward the waiting group.

"Whew! Some getaway!" breathed Knowlton. "Our guests must be arriving."

"Get my idea?" demanded McKay.

"Sure," was the answering chorus. "And it's a peach."

José slowed to a stop beside the rest.

"They come, *amigos*," he panted. "They are——"

"All right, listen a minute!"

Swiftly the plan of battle was outlined to him. His face cracked in a ferocious grin. Without another word he scooped up extra cartridges and stepped over the side, knee-deep. The others also slipped overboard and crouched.

To the Indian who spoke Spanish, McKay gave brief instructions. He grunted them rapidly to the savages standing before the knot of gunmen. Barely had he finished when a mutter of mingled rage and fear ran down the line.

It was swallowed up by an outbreak of exultant yells from the trees. Over there beyond the dancing heat-waves a band of painted men, naked but for maroon loin-clouts, broke cover. All were light-skinned, fierce-faced, equipped with jungle weapons and wooden shields. They pointed, gesticulated, howled in gloating glee at the sight of the almost unarmed men and the huddling women and girls waiting desperately at the water's edge. Their quarry was run down at last. Heads for the taking—women for the clutching—a revel of butchery and a Jivero holiday!

Out upon the sand they sprinted, vying with one another for first blood and first slave. The waiting victims cast anxious glances back at their new allies and took heart. The white men were tense, ready, peering through the fringe of naked legs concealing them, holding their fire.

Five—six—seven yards out—the first Jiveros began to bound higher and glance down at their feet. Ten yards—sharp grunts of startled pain broke from them. Twelve—fifteen—the grunts rose into yelps and yowls. The leaders tried to swerve aside.

They collided with one another, tripped, stumbled and sprawled on the burning sands. Then they screeched.

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An answering screech came from the water's edge—a shrill scream of laughter from José. Like a flash it ran along the line of fugitives standing cool-footed in the water. They howled and roared and twittered and squeaked, man and woman and child pointing derisive fingers at their foes. That ridicule stung more sorely even than the furnace below. The Jiveros, red-mad with rage and pain, leaped forward again.

As they came they loosed a wild volley of arrows. The laughter ceased abruptly. In the waiting line men slumped down and lay still, long shafts protruding from their bodies.

"Now! Open!" roared McKay.

The Indian leader howled the command in his own tongue. Before the masked battery of white men a gap sprang open, Indians plunging to right and left. Through that gap darted flame-spurts and crackling reports.

The foremost Jiveros, now only twenty yards away, sprawled again. This time they did not rise.

The clatter of four breech-bolts and of one lever action rattled out. Then another swift rip of gunfire, terminating in the sulfurous bang of José's forty-four. Five more blood-mad slayers dropped on the sizzling sand.

The rest, shocked through with sudden fear at finding guns belching death into them, dug in their heels and stopped. But they could not stop long. The burning pain at their feet bit deeper. And in the instant of their pause the guns spat a third time.

The soft thumps of more bodies striking earth, the intolerable torment under foot, the swift realization that water and relief and their enemies all were nearer now than the trees, stabbed the killers into final fierce attack. Frothing, screeching, the survivors jumped ahead, throwing spears and whirling war-clubs. In another crash of flame and smoke five more of them pitched headlong and died.

One more clatter—one more rip and bang—then the gunmen sprang up, reaching for their pistols. The last five Jiveros of the thirty-strong band were almost upon them.

But the hand-guns remained silent. In a sudden pounce the men of the white Indians hurled themselves on the remnant of their foes. Without a signal, without plan, without reason except the simultaneous primal impulse to avenge themselves on the merciless creatures who had harried them through the jungle and who now were within arm's length, the men who had just been the hunted became the killers. With tree-branch club, with fist and nail and tooth, they battered and tore those last Jiveros into mangled pulp.

The burning sands, only a moment ago alive with charging head-hunters, now were belted from bank to water with contorted bodies. Along that hot lane of death nothing moved. The Jivero band was wiped out.

CHAPTER XV

JOSÉ TAKES A CHANCE

THE white men, watching the ferocious annihilation of the few remaining warriors, backed away and reloaded their rifles.

"A wolf-pack," McKay warned. "Look out they don't turn on us. Get aboard."

A wolf-pack it seemed, indeed, when it drew away from the corpses it had made from fighting men. Gashed, bruised, bloodied by the last desperate thrusts and blows of the head-hunters and by injuries inflicted on one another in the savage mêlée, it glared hotly around as if seeking fresh objects on which to vent its fury. But, now that it had made its kill, the pack speedily cooled. Perhaps the steady stare of the white men and the silent menace of ready rifle-muzzles peering over the canoe gunwales aided the cooling.

For a long quiet minute savage and civilized men looked one another in the eye. Then the chief stepped forward, harsh, grim, barbaric, streaked with red from a deep slash down one cheek, but holding up a friendly hand. In tones far more mellow than the whites had heard from him heretofore, he spoke at some length. As he finished he waved a hand toward the women.

McKay made a sign of incomprehension. The chief looked about, seeking his interpreter. With the same thought in mind, the Americans also searched faces. Then Tim pointed.

"Tough luck," he said. "We'll never know what this guy's tryin' to tell us. Lookit there."

Huddled in the shallow water lay the chief's right-hand man—the only one in his tribe who could speak Spanish. Through his throat, and out from the back of his neck, jutted a Jivero spear.

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With a sudden unintelligible sound the chief sprang toward that motionless figure. Dropping on one knee, he turned the face upward. Despite the unmistakable deadliness of the wound, he seemed loath to believe that the younger man was not still alive. Presently, however, he slowly arose and stood staring out across the water as if unseeing. When he turned back to his people his step was springless and his face seamed with new lines.

José, watching, felt a sudden twinge of sympathy. Between those two must have existed a closer bond than that of chief and subject.

"*Hijo?*" he asked.

The somber Indian gave no sign that he heard. McKay, who had picked up a few words of the Quichua tongue in the Andes, repeated the question in that language.

"*Churi?* Son?"

The hollow eyes turned to his.

"*Zapai churi,*" he croaked. "My only son."

The captain nodded and strove to express condolence; but the effort was fruitless, for the requisite Quichua was not in his vocabulary. The chief, however, seemed to understand. He spoke again, a short sentence in which McKay recognized the words "*iscun*" and "*ushushi,*" and motioned again toward the women, a number of whom now stood staring sorrowfully at the head guide.

"Chief has nine daughters," he translated. "But his only son is dead. Too bad. I rather liked that young chap. Well, we may as well go back to camp and get the rest of our stuff. May be more Jiveros along later."

"Not unless another band is out," José disagreed. "None of these escaped."

"Sure?"

"Certain, *capitan.* I made it my task to watch those nearest the bush and to shoot some who tried to turn back. There is none to carry news of us."

"Good head!" Knowlton complimented. "You're a cool one, José. Well, Rod, I don't see any necessity for abandoning our camp. These chaps aren't likely to bother us after what we've done for them, even if we did burn their house a while ago. Tell 'em to beat it, and we'll resume housekeeping in our new jungle-bungle-o."

McKay considered. The white Indians, who now owed their lives to them, were hardly to be regarded longer as enemies; moreover, even if devoid of gratitude they would not be so senseless as to attempt an attack on the riflemen whose prowess now was ineradicably fixed in their memories. Rand's leg, too, must be worse than ever by this time. And they needed the jerked meat they had planned to get.

"All right. But we'll have to shift camp," he compromised. "Plain trail leads to it now, thanks to the feet of this gang. We'll go back there for the present. After we've shooed these people out we'll make another camp farther along."

The three canoes floated backward, turned, and journeyed to the inlet. More slowly, the Indians came swashing behind, a long stoical file, the women watching the gliding dugouts of the bearded outlanders and the men carrying the bodies of their fellows who had gone down before Jivero arrow or spear.

The end of the homeless procession passed the spot where sprawled the disfigured bodies of the head-hunters last to die. It receded down the edge of the scorching sand which had slowed the enemy attack and aided the straight-shooting whites to annihilate the assailants. Then through the heat quivering over the battle-field came a swift rush of wings. On the motionless Jiveros settled the grisly black army of the upper air, which had been gathering from the four quarters since the first rifle-volley, and which now fixed rending beak and talon in the fallen.

Again the canoes grounded at the shallow end of the water-lane. José hopped out, thoughtfully watched the approaching horde, glanced at the stretch of sand, and spoke.

"Halt them here, *capitan.* They move slowly with their dead; and the feet of the young are tender."

While the others looked puzzled, he sprinted across the hot space and was gone among the trees. Then from the bush came sounds of a chopping machete.

"Huh! Funny sort of a galoot, ain't he?" queried Tim. "He's goin' to bridge over this sand, I bet, to save the tootsies of them women and kids. And yet he don't think no more o' killin' men than o' smokin' a cigaret. Dangerous as a tiger-cat one minute and gentle as a woman—a good woman—the next. Me, I'd let 'em blister every foot in the crowd before I'd bother meself to help 'em out."

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With which he belied his own words by gging it across the furnace to aid José.

By the time the chief reached the halting-ace the pair were emerging with great mfuls of poles and long palm-leaves, with hich they rapidly threw a path of compara-ve comfort across to the head of the inlet.

"Women and kids first!" commanded im. "This stuff'll shrivel up in no time. ome on, make it fast!"

So, after the chief caught the idea and ıve his orders, the weaker ones of the ibe scampered along the green lane which ready was curling up in the heat. After ıem the body-bearers strode heavily. The ·en behind got across as best they could, ır no more leaves were put down for them. ast came the Americans, Rand trying not) limp and the other two carrying ammuni-on cases.

Back to the camp trudged the whites. nd back to the camp the whole homeless ibe flocked with them. For a minute or vo, before giving further attention to the ıdians, the adventurers were busy glancing ver the effects which they had been com-elled to leave behind.

"Jiveros found this place, all right," com-ıented Rand. "See how the stuff's been awed over? But nothing's gone. They gured on looting the shack on their way ack with the heads and slaves."

"Prob'ly figgered to find our trail too, fter they cleaned up these folks, and git ɔme white-man ornaments," agreed Tim. But say, cap, what are these guys hangin' ɔund for? If they think we're goin' to ·ed 'em and build a new house for 'em hey better think again."

It was quite evident that the white In-ians wanted something; or, at least, that heir chief did. He stood before the hut, rave eyes on the bearded men, obviously waiting a chance to speak. McKay turned o him and pointed toward the river in a ılain gesture of dismissal. But the chief nade no move. He looked quietly into ach alien face in turn. Then, in mono-one, he talked.

WHAT the chief said the five did not understand. The chief, seeing their blank expression, seemed to epeat. He pointed solemnly down at his lead son. He pointed toward the women. He waved a hand along the line of white men. Several times he reiterated two words—

"Churi chascai."

McKay, frowning, fingered his jaw in perplexity.

"Don't get you," he confessed. "Only word I understand is *churi*—son. Anybody know what *churi chascai* is?"

Nobody did. But Tim was, as usual, willing to take a chance.

"Mebbe *chascai* is a gun," he hazarded. "We got guns. Mebbe he's tryin' to tell us we're sons-o'-guns. That might be a big compliment in his lingo."

Ludicrous as the suggestion was, nobody snickered. Tim, testing out his wild guess, held up his rifle and raised his brows. The chief looked bewildered, then made a sign of negation and patiently began repeating his talk.

"That lets me out," confessed Tim. "Dave, try the ol' feller with some o' yer Javary cannibal talk. Mebbe he'll understand that."

But the tribal ruler, listening to a series of monotonous gutturals from the lips of the former Wild Dog, showed no comprehension.

"Wish we had a Quichua vocabulary along," Knowlton regretted. "The old boy wants something and intends to get it, and he evidently can talk some Quichua, though I don't believe it's his usual language."

"Perhaps, *señor*, he knows the Tupi tongue spoken by the Amazonian Indians down below," suggested José. "I can speak it, though not well. And I know some Zaparo words also. Let us see."

To the chief he spoke two words:

"Herayi? Niato?"

This time the chief understood.

"Niato," he repeated, nodding down at his son's body. *"Noqui cunian."*

"Ah," said José. "He speaks the Zaparo, but not the Tupi. He has just said in Zaparo what he said before in Quichua: 'Son. My only son.' Perhaps I can learn——"

The chief interrupted. With another slow wave toward the white men and then toward the women, he said—

"Acamia."

José started.

"Acamia?" he repeated incredulously, pointing to himself. "But no!"

The Indian nodded firmly. He pointed at the outlaw, then at each of the Americans in turn. While José still stared he spoke five words. Slowly, shyly, five maidens

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came forward and stood beside him; graceful, handsome girls, shapely, dark-eyed, flushed, smiling a little, coy but conscious of their charms.

"Gee!" muttered Tim. "Look who's here! Funny I didn't see them li'l queens before. I must be gittin' near-sighted or somethin'."

Wherewith he gave the little bevy a wide grin. Five perfect sets of teeth flashed a response. But, as the maidens let their deep eyes stray along the other American faces, their smiles faded. Knowlton's blond-bearded face was unresponsive, Rand's dark-haired jaw was impassive, and McKay's black-whiskered countenance was cold.

"*Acamia?*" muttered the captain. "I don't know Zaparo, but I'll bet I know what *acamia* means."

"What?" queried Knowlton.

"Wait and see."

José, recovering himself, pointed to the ground and squatted. The chief sank down into position for lengthy conference. Whereafter, by words and signs frequently repeated, with pauses and puzzlings and new starts, a laborious process of exchanging ideas proceeded.

After a little time the three able-bodied Americans stirred.

"Looks like a protracted pow-wow," said Knowlton. "We might as well make ourselves useful as well as ornamental. Some of our cans are still broiling out yonder, and time's getting away."

"Right," the captain agreed. "Dave, keep on sitting in your hammock and twiddling your gun. We'll finish our moving."

Leaving their rifles with Rand, they returned to the canoes and loaded themselves with the hot tins. Neither going nor returning did one of them speak a word, though Tim broke into sudden chuckles at times. Though none was positive, each had a strong suspicion regarding the subject of the conference—a surmise amounting almost to knowledge.

Back at the camp they coolly busied themselves with preparations for moving farther along, as McKay had intended. The Indians, standing about in aboriginal patience, watched them and gave ear to the progress of the difficult conversation between chief and outlaw. The five girls smiled no more, but soberly contemplated the dead younger chief, lifting their gaze now and then to see what the bearded men were about.

AT LENGTH José and the tribal ruler arose.

"Comrades," the outlaw announced with a grin, "the words *chui chascai* and *acamia* are not the same, but they mean the same thing to us now. The chief who yesterday wanted us for victims now wants us as—*acamia*. And the Zaparo word *ocamia* means son-by-marriage!"

He paused dramatically. The Americans only nodded slightly, as if they had known it all the time.

"Behold, *amigos*, our brides!"

With a mock-courtly gesture he indicated the five jungle beauties. His partners complied, beheld, and looked back at him without facial change.

"*Por Dios!*" sputtered the exasperated Latin. "Are you sticks? Have you no eyes—no hearts—no bowels—no——"

"We got plenty o' guts, feller, and we ain't blind," retorted Tim. "But tell us somethin' new. We knowed that an hour ago."

"*Si?* And you knew also that these are the highest and most beautiful maidens of the tribe—the handsomest daughters of the chief himself?"

Eyes opened at this. José, having scored a sensation at last, recovered his aplomb.

"*Si*, of the chief!" he repeated. "So you did not suspect you were so greatly honored. It is as I say. The chief—his name is Pachac—has never created a son, and says that Piatzo—the Great Father, or God—will give him only girls. So now that his only son is dead——"

"Hold on!" expostulated Knowlton. "You're stepping on your own foot. You say he can't have sons, yet his only son is——"

José guffawed, drowning the rest.

"Ah, yes, *amigo*," he laughed. "Yet it is true. What Piatzo would not do for Chief Pachac, a Spaniard did. So says Pachac himself. Years ago a Spanish adventurer fell into the hands of Pachac—and, when Pachac was not looking, into the arms of one of the wives of Pachac. Where the Spaniard afterward went the chief does not tell me, but from that wife was born this man who now lies dead on the ground."

Looking down into the Spanish face of that dead man, the listeners nodded.

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"That explains a lot," said McKay. "Go on."

"*Si.* That bold, lone —— of a Spaniard must have been a man after my own heart—ready for love even in the jaws of death—a true son of the Conquistadores! Hah! If we Spaniards were not so busy with blood and gold we could people the world with men—fighting men! And Chief Pachac knows it.

"He has seen what kind of son that white man gave him. He has seen us white men kill six times our own number of Jiveros without winking an eye. He has seen us, prisoners in a mud cell, outwit his whole tribe and destroy his power. He is no fool, Pachac. Now he will make us all his sons, and behind the protection of our guns he will make his tribe strong again, and through us he will become the grandfather of many man-children who will grow into great fighters against the accursed hunters of heads."

There was a pause. Pachac and his winsome daughters and his broken people watched the white men. The white men stared coolly back—except Tim, who grinned and finally laughed outright.

"Cripes, if this ain't the limit!" he gurgled. "O!' Lady Fate is sure a funny ol' skate; throws ye into the fryin'-pan and then lets ye hop out into a basket o' peaches. And if ye gobble the peaches, like as not they sour on yer stummick."

McKay's mouth twitched.

"True. Especially the last part. José, we're highly honored and so on, but we're here for gold, not girls. Tell the chief to trot along home."

"*Madre de Dios!* You refuse?"

"Speaking for Roderick McKay, I do. Every man can make his own choice."

"The gang sticks together," seconded Knowlton.

"But, *capitan—amigos*—comrades! These are no dirty brown women— Their skins are fairer than our own tanned hides! And if you have no fire in your veins, think of the gold! By joining the tribe we increase our own power. When they are strong again we lead them into the cordillera. We go with fighting men of the jungle behind us——"

"And then what?" demanded the captain.

"We find the gold, and then——"

"That's it. Then?"

José cogitated.

"I see. You *señores* are of North America. With gold you return to your own land. You are not outlaws, like me, with no land to call home. To go you must abandon your new wives. You would not. So you will have no wives. You will be free. I see."

His black eyes dwelt on his fighting mates, then on the handsome girls. His head tilted, and a reckless smile grew on his face.

"You all refuse these girls?" he demanded.

Four nods answered.

"But you stay here until Señor Dave is strong and you have shot and cured much meat?"

"Unless we have to move."

"If these people will be your friends you will not drive them from you?"

"Certainly not."

"*Bueno!*"

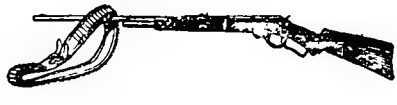
With that devil-may-care smile still stretching his mouth he turned to Pachac. Another conference ensued. At length the chief, after a dubious pause, assented to something.

The girls looked startled. Then their teeth flashed again. But this time the smiles were not for Tim or his countrymen. They were for José.

And José, with swaggering stride, stepped among them. He slipped sinewy arms over the two nearest pairs of shapely shoulders, drew the giggling girls masterfully to him, and grinned diabolically at the four "sticks" from North America.

"*Gracias,*" he mocked. "As you have said, *capitan,* every man makes his own choice. Since you scorn these little tigresses of the Tigre Yacu, I take them all!"

TO BE CONTINUED



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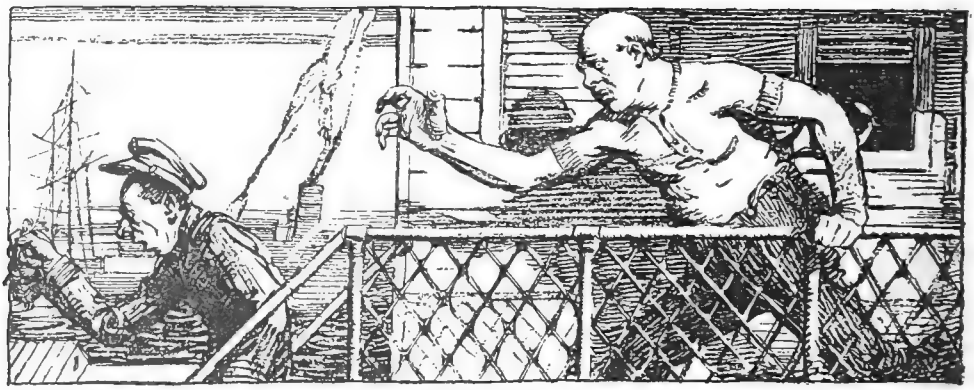

PADDY BURNBROOK'S WIG

BY W. TOWNEND

Author of "Fate," "The Revenge of Malachi Doddrick," etc.

THERE was a knock at the door of Mr. Harrington's room on board the *Hyacinth* and there entered a magnificently dressed young man with glossy black hair brushed straight back from his forehead, and a pink flower in his buttonhole. He looked embarrassed and ill at ease, as though not quite sure of himself, in spite of his clothes.

"Chief," he said huskily, "I'm gaun the noo!"

And then, with a feeling of consternation, I recognized in the smart young man the second engineer of the *Hyacinth*, whom I had hitherto seen clad in a shabby old blue uniform or a boiler suit, smothered in grease.

Mr. Harrington was sniffing, ostentatiously.

"Scent!" he said. "Eau de Cologne, as I'm a Dutchman! Mac, I wouldn't have thought it of you!"

The second engineer grinned.

"All right," said Mr. Harrington. "Cut along, then, an' good luck! An', Mac, if I was you I'd be above lettin' folks know I was wearin' a new suit for the first time. Tear the price ticket from off your jacket, for heaven's sake!"

The second engineer blushed and vanished.

"Wonderful!" said Mr. Harrington. "Mac's goin' to visit the girl's father an' mother an' he wants to create an impression. Maybe he thinks he's more of a catch when he's got brilliantine all over his hair an' a tie on that would hold up the traffic in Piccadilly! It's human nature, of course."

Mr. Harrington smoked for a while in silence, puffing steadily, and gazing at the shelf of books on the opposite wall.

"Have you ever thought how like Mac is to Paddy Burnbrook?" he said presently. "You remember old Paddy, of course!"

"Now let me see!" I said. "Which was he? The mate who was going to raise pedigree cattle in North Wales, or the second engineer who tried to borrow money to set up a goat ranch in British Columbia?"

Mr. Harrington, a farmer in theory, though a chief engineer by necessity, surveyed me coldly.

"Neither," he said, "an' you know it! Paddy Burnbrook was captain of the *Hollyhock!* You met him."

And then there flashed into my mind the picture of Paddy Burnbrook, as I had seen him in San Francisco; a big, stout man with a big voice, the loudest, deepest laugh imaginable, a big, red face, twinkling eyes, a square chin, and thick, curly brown hair.

"Yes," I said. "I remember; ten years ago!"

Mr. Harrington counted on his fingers.

"——!" he said. "So it is! Ten years! Well, well! Time still potters along, don't it?"

"You said Mac was like Paddy Burnbrook," I said. "I don't see it. What way?"

"I wasn't talkin' about looks exactly," said Mr. Harrington. "Mac's like him in

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other ways. He's got the same ideas about dressin' himself up, anyhow. You don't say you've forgotten old Paddy's clothes, have you?"

"I'm afraid I have," I said.

Mr. Harrington nodded.

"Funny! Old Paddy Burnbrook's clothes were the most remarkable things about him. If you saw him swaggerin' along the street, you'd have thought him a duke or an earl or a millionaire at the very least; anything except what he was; master of the s.s. *Hollyhock*, scrapin' along on his pay, an' what he could make on the side, same as the rest of us. A blanked hard case, old Paddy, but a good seaman. Takin' him all round, I suppose he was the most hospitable man I ever met. An' the meanest. If he hadn't a couple of friends draggin' after him whom he could buy drinks for he wasn't happy. An' yet when it came to payin' his bills he was close-fisted. There wasn't a tailor between here an' Hongkong that he didn't owe money to. Buyin' new suits for himself was his chief hobby after buyin' drinks for his friends."

Mr. Harrington then apparently lost the thread of his story.

"Happen to know anything about wigs?" he asked.

The question startled me.

"What's that to do with Paddy Burnbrook?" I said.

Mr. Harrington's thin lips twitched in his gentle, lop-sided smile.

OH, NOTHIN', of course (he began). Paddy had the finest head of hair in the world—brown an' curly an' thick—no one was more proud of his crop than he was. Queer, eh! My first voyage as chief of the *Hollyhock* was the one when I had the swim in the *Hydrangea's* stokehold. Remember? I'd never met Paddy Burnbrook before that trip an' it wasn't till we were on the run from New York to the Cape with a cargo of motor cars an' machinery that we had a chance to get what you'd call intimate. I learnt then that he'd got weaknesses same as the rest of us.

But about his hair! He said to me one night when we were havin' a talk in the chart-room—

"Harrington," he says, "do you realize that there's not a gray hair in my head?"

I said I'd noticed.

"Yes," says he, "not a single one! An' that, Harrington, is the diff'rence between us!"

Well, well! What do you make of it, eh? He was as pleased as a pup with a bar of soap.

An' then when we were lyin' in Algoa Bay I saved his life. Better than that I saved something a sight more valuable—to him, anyway. You listen, an' I'll tell you everything. A queer kind of yarn from beginnin' to end. Preposterous, lookin' at things from a civilized point of view, but the gospel truth. An' chock full of heroism, same as most of my stories.

It was ev'nin', when it began, an' the lighters we'd been dischargin' into were bein' towed away by a tug. The mate was goin' to scull round the ship in the workin' boat which the hands had had over the side, paintin'. He wanted to see how much they'd done. I wanted to have a look at the propeller which had had one of its blades chipped on some wreckage after we rounded the Cape.

"Isn't that Paddy comin' off in a rowboat?" the mate says.

The day had been calm an' quiet, an' no sign of a sou'-easter an' Paddy had gone ashore on business. An' then the mate went to his room for something an' I climbed down the ladder into the boat. I watched the tow of lighters an' the tug bringin' 'em round. An' then before I knew what was happenin' I saw the tug cut slap into the rowboat.

I cast off the rope an' sculled with one oar as quick as I could to'rd the old man. He was swimmin', high out of the water, bareheaded. As he came near, he seemed to be gettin' tired. I shipped the oar an' found he was further away than I'd judged. I made a grab an' caught hold of his hair. An', listen! his hair came away in my hand. I —— near fell out of the boat on top of him.

"Hang on to it, man!" he says, an' he went under.

I was holdin' a wig! He came to the surface an' I sat an' stared at his bald head. He cursed me.

"Keep between me an' the ship!" he says.

He swam to the boat, his head low. I knew then he hadn't been tired at all. He'd been keepin' his hair dry.

"Harrington," he says, "give me that wig of mine!"

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He put it on, still in the water, an' then hoisted himself into the boat. He looked at the ship, hard.

"There's no one seen me, anyway," he says. "Harrington, I'll ask you to say nothin' about what's happened. If the rest of the crowd on board knew that I wore a wig, I'd be ruined for life."

An' then, of course, I promised I'd tell no one.

"Good!" says he. "An' what's become of the boatman?"

But the tug had him, so we went back to the ship just as the mate was comin' on deck again.

Later, the old man told me he'd worn a wig for the past twenty years. I suppose you're wonderin' how in the world he could do it without everyone knowin'! I'll tell you. He'd a fringe of hair, thick an' curly, from the nape of his neck to just about three inches up; so where the hair an' the wig joined was on the back of his head, level with the top of his ears. There was no sudden end of the wig an' then bare flesh. It was the finest wig that I ever saw. Wonderful.

"But," says I, "doesn't even the steward know?"

The look that Paddy gave me was enough to show what he thought.

"No," he says. "He doesn't. Purley—" was the steward's name—"has been with me so long I wouldn't know how to manage without him, but," says he, "I don't tell him more of my private affairs than I need!"

WELL, from then on, Paddy Burnbrook an' I were as thick as pickpockets. I had his secret, the secret he'd guarded like an old ewe her lamb, an' I'd given my word not to tell on him, an' I didn't. But as soon as I reached home I found I needn't have been so —— particular.

I'd kept to myself pretty much all the voyage, an' so what was common talk on the ship I never heard. An' then one February ev'nin' when we were lyin' in Surrey Commercial Docks, dischargin' cargo, a clerk from the office in Fenchurch Street came aboard with some papers. The mate told him he'd find the captain in his room. He went up the ladder an' came down again.

"He's not there!" he says.

"He is," says the mate.

"There's some one else in the room," says the clerk.

"Oh!" says the mate. "What's he look like?"

"He had his back to the door," says the clerk, "but he's stout an' he's bald!"

"Oh!" says the mate. "Then you'd better wait."

By'n' by, Paddy, dressed in his best clothes, came to the head of the ladder. The clerk gave him the letters an' he took them into his room to read them. The mate laughed.

"Well," he says, "there's one man at least who doesn't know about Paddy's wig! That little feller saw him an' thought it was someone else!"

An' that's the first time I guessed that anyone else but me knew of the wig! But they all knew. Every mother's son of 'em! An' if they hadn't have known, the steward, Purley, would have told 'em.

I suppose, takin' him first an' last, Purley had a more twisted sense of humor than any man of his size an' weight goin' to sea! A queer little card; a Cockney, of course, from Limehouse; small, quick, handy at his work, always grinnin'; very neat; smooth, you might call him. An' he had old Paddy eatin' crums from his hand! Funny, eh! Paddy swore by him. Myself, I didn't trust him a foot farther than I could see him without gettin' up from my chair!

It was while we were still lyin' in Surrey Commercial Docks, that I made the acquaintance of Cousin George. He doesn't come into the yarn much, not really, an' I wouldn't waste time talkin' about him at all, but that my meetin' with him led to my hearin' of Mrs. Mooring. It was rainin' old boots at the time, an' cold as charity, an', after the hot Summer weather we'd had at the Cape, we were just about frozen.

I was in my room, goin' through some papers, when there came a knock an' Purley opened the door.

"Gentleman to speak to you, sir," he says.

An' then he winked his eye at me an' vanished. In the alleyway was the gentleman, in a soft hat an' a wet rain-coat. A thin, mis'rable little owl with a big nose an' a droopin' mustache, like tow, an' a turnip-shaped head an' bags under his eyes.

I thought he was some one tryin' to sell

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me insurance, or a calf-bound set of the English poets or a gard'nin' manual, an' I'd made up my mind to say I was too busy to see him when he stepped into my room, as bold as the three brass balls over a Cardiff pawnbroker's.

"Captain Burnbrook's not on board," he says; "so I asked for the chief engineer."

"Well," says I, "is there anything special you want?"

He looked round the room, kind of considerin', an' I waited, wonderin' what particular line of graft his was.

"It's very extraordinary," he says, "but I was positive Captain Burnbrook said he'd be on board ship this afternoon if I looked him up! We're old friends," he says.

An' then he seated himself on my settee, without so much as a by-your-leave, an' took out his pipe, an' found he was short of tobacco an' would I oblige an' I did.

"I've known Captain Burnbrook for years," he says, smokin' away like a galley-chimney, "an' it's put me out not findin' him in. Most awkward it is!"

He laughed an' looked at me very earnestly. An' then I knew. I ought to be kicked, I thought, for not havin' guessed at once. He was goin' to touch me. I could feel the pains comin' on. He did touch me.

Cuttin' a long story short, I gave the blighter ten shillings just to get rid of him! He'd forgotten his purse. He was the kind that would. On purpose!

"Mr. Harrington," he says, "I'll never forget your kindness. Tell Captain Burnbrook with my compliments that Mrs. Mooring's Cousin George called an' was most disappointed at not bein' able to stay till he came back. But I'll see him to-morrer.'"

"Mrs. Mooring?" I says.

"Why, yes," says he, surprized. "You know who I mean—Florence!"

I gave his message to Paddy. He was worried.

"You weren't rude to him, Harrington, were you?" he says. "Or abrupt? He's a queer-lookin' fish, I know, but," says he, "he's got a heart of gold!"

"I wasn't rude," I says, "nor was I abrupt. He touched me for half a thick 'un!"

An' then Paddy blinked at me an' his big red face split into creases an' he yelled! ——! I thought he'd go off in a stroke, or hysterics, he laughed so much.

"Harrington," he says, "he'll pay you, of course. But if he doesn't, I'll give you the money myself!"

That puzzled me. Paddy Burnbrook wasn't as generous as this often! There was something behind it, I knew. Not that he ever would pay me, of course—an' as a matter of fact, he didn't—but he'd promised, an' a promise with Paddy was as much of a wrench to him as the actual money from any one else.

"Harrington," he says, "maybe I'd better tell you who Cousin George is! He spoke about Mrs. Mooring, you say?"

I said that he had.

"He called her Florence!"

Paddy nodded his head. An' then he took a photograph out of his wallet an' gave it me.

"That's Florence!" he says. "She's a widow. The most beautiful woman I ever met! Did you ever see any one like her?"

I hadn't. She was forty-five, by her looks, an' fat! An' wearin' a get-up that would have suited a kid of nineteen!

"She's wonderful!" I says.

"Yes," says Paddy, "wonderful. You wouldn't think from her photo, Harrington—an' it doesn't flatter her—you wouldn't think she was thirty-four, would you?"

You wouldn't. Paddy was right. I said so.

"But she is," he says, "that's her age. An' some day," he says, "I'm goin' to ask her to be my wife. She likes me, I know, but I've got to be careful. There's no use spoilin' my chance by bein' in too great a hurry," he says, "is there?"

"An' Cousin George?" says I.

"An able man," says Paddy. "Most capable. Florence thinks the world of her Cousin George," he says, "an' so do I! He's quite a philosopher when you get to know him, with a wonderful sense of humor. Florence is the same. I want you to meet her. You'll like her!"

A DAY or so later we sailed from London to Liverpool to load for the U. S. A., an' it wasn't till two voyages after that we were back in London once more, in West India Dock, about the middle of June. Paddy Burnbrook's love affair had been hangin' fire. He'd taken the train from Liverpool down to London when we were last home on purpose to ask

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Florence to marry him, but somehow or other his courage failed an' he didn't dare. He saw her, though, an' he came back to the ship, deeper in love than ever.

He told me that Cousin George was workin' at last. I asked what at. Paddy said he was inventin' something that would save people trouble of workin', or something similar, an' he'd advanced him fifteen pounds for a quarter share in the profits. A fine investment, he said. Myself, I thought he'd taken leave of what little sense was left to him!

Poor old Paddy! He was scared of the widow, of course. Though, of nothin' else. Many's the time that I've seen him at sea, stalkin' to an' fro on the lower bridge, hands in his pockets, head bent, thinkin' of Florence! Maybe, perhaps, in another an' thinner man, you'd have thought his devotion touchin', but with Paddy you wanted to laugh!

But now we were back in London he'd determined, he said, to get the widow to promise to be his wife, or else tell him he was no more to her than—than, you might put it, a bank on which Cousin George could draw without worryin' her!

One hot afternoon I wanted a hair-cut. I walked up the West India Dock Road till I came to a barber's. Kishnard was the name over the front. I went inside. In the outer shop, at the back of the counter, where there were cigar boxes an' cigarets an' soaps an' hair oils, was a girl with fair hair, all frizzy an' curly, an' a beamin' smile.

"Good afternoon," I says.

"Very warm, isn't it?" she says. Then she looked at me, hard. "I've seen you before, haven't I?"

That put the wind up me.

"I don't think you have," I says. "I want some cigars."

"Why, yes, Mr. Harrington," says she, "certainly." An' she laughed.

"Who told you my name?" I says.

She was a pretty enough girl in her way, with her golden curls an' her blue eyes an' innocent baby smile, but too knowin'!

"Maybe you did yourself," she says.

"No," I says, "I didn't. A man's name is his own property. If he isn't a born fool," I says, "he'll keep it."

An' then I went into the inner shop an' the barber, a little man in a white coat, with a hooked nose an' an Adam's apple, asked what he could do for me.

"Hair-cut, please," I says, "short at the back."

I settled myself in the chair an' closed my eyes.

"You're Mr. Harrington of the *Hollyhock*," says the barber. "Aren't you?"

But by now I was ready. "I am," says I, an' I wondered what he would say next.

He clipped for a while without speakin'. Then he said—

"He's done me a lot of favors, Captain Burnbrook has."

"Oh!" I says. "Indeed!"

An' what favors had a man like old Paddy done for a little barber with the name Kishnard, eh? I waited.

"I've not seen him for a long time now," says the barber. "Is he well?"

"He is," I says.

"I'm thinkin' of payin' him a visit to thank him for all his help," says the barber.

"He'll be delighted to see you, no doubt!" I says.

"I'll be round early tomorrow," says he. "Kishnard's my name. He knows me well!"

When I went out the young lady with the frizzy, gold hair was leanin' over the counter just as I'd left her.

"Mr. Harrington," says Kishnard, "this is my sister, Amy!" She said she'd heard of me so often she looked on me quite as an old acquaintance.

A queer couple. Too knowin', altogether, too clever. It was the girl had the brains, of course. I heard them laugh as the door closed after me. Sinister, eh? I wondered. But listen what followed. Preposterous, same as I said. But the truth.

After breakfast next mornin' I told Paddy that Kishnard was comin' to see him. An' at once all the good of the day had gone so far as he was concerned. He took me into his room an' shut the door.

"Harrington," he says, "this is terrible!"

An' then—well, it was like one of them movin' pictures—he crossed the room on his toes an' opened the door quick an' looked out on deck to see if there was anyone list'nin'.

"Harrington," he says, closin' the door again. "Listen to me! It's that —— wig of mine!" An' then he told me. Kishnard had said if he made him a wig, would he wear it? For an advertisement, like! He would. An' he did. An' what more did Kishnard expect him to do? Pay for it! Why? Didn't he give it him?

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"Do you let him say he made you a wig?" I says. "I'm not crazy!" says Paddy. "If that little rat dared say a word, I'd kill him!"

Fine ad., though, wasn't it? But I didn't argue.

"I wish to Heaven," says Paddy, "I'd never been foolish enough to try to hide that I'm bald. An' yet," says he, "if there's one thing more than another Florence hates it's bald-headed men! If she knew that I wore a wig, Harrington, she'd throw me over!"

I'd have thought, myself, he'd have paid off the barber rather than run any risk. Not him.

"Kishnard," he says, "is tryin' to make me pay what I don't owe, but I won't!"

He was stubborn, was Paddy, stubborn as blazes.

"Are you goin' to see him, if he comes?" I says.

"I'll have to," says he.

KISHNARD arrived on board, just as he'd said. I watched him an' Paddy talkin' on the lower bridge; Paddy, smilin' affably, his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth, pretendin' to be quite at his ease, but scared, I knew; an' Kishnard, bobbin' his head an' smilin' an' scrapin', an' as scared as Paddy. Paddy twisted him all right. He would.

"Tact's what you need," he says, after the barber had gone. "Just tact!"

"Did you give him his money?" I says.

Paddy laughed.

"Did I? No, I didn't. I told him I didn't owe him a penny. But," says Paddy, "I said if he thought I did, if I'd been under a misapprehension the whole time about the wig bein' a gift, why, then, I'd pay him. But," says he, chucklin', "I told him he'd have to wait a bit longer, as I was unfortunately overdrawn at the bank for the moment!"

He laughed. He always was overdrawn, of course.

"How did he take it?" says I.

"Oh, fine!" says Paddy. "I promised I'd pay him the money I owed next time we met!"

"An' will you?" says I.

"Harrington," says he, "if I pay the money I owe, I'll pay him nothin', for I owe him nothin'. What's more, I'll take —— good care that we never meet after today! He needn't imagine he's goin' to trample on me, for he can't!"

Purley came up the ladder.

"Purley," says Paddy, angry at the sight of him; "if you let that —— worry me again there's goin' to be such a —— riot on board this ship you'll be sorry you ever were born. Understand?"

"No, sir," says Purley. "I don't!"

"Then," says Paddy, "you're more of a fool than I thought. He's a crook, that man, an' a bad one; he thinks that I owe him money; I don't. He did me a service once," Paddy says, "an' so I'm lenient, but if he dares come aboard again, I'll hand him over to the dock police for tryin' to get money under false pretenses!"

Poor old Paddy! He knew how to tell the tale, always! Purley had nothin' to say, of course, but for once in a way he looked like he was gettin' fed up with Paddy an' the ship an' everything. You listen what happened next!

Tea time, the same afternoon, Paddy an' Purley quarreled. I didn't see what took place, but I had the benefit of a full an' thrillin' description, first from Paddy himself, an' then from the second mate.

On board the *Hollyhock* the chief steward's room opened into an alley-way that led to the saloon. Paddy was lookin' for something he'd left on the table at dinner—a paper. He was in a hurry. He wanted Purley. The door of Purley's room was open a couple of inches an' he gave it a push.

"Purley!" he says.

But the room was empty. Purley had gone aft to the store. An' then just as Paddy was goin' to turn away, he saw on the bunk a box of cigars. There was something about the box that looked kind of familiar an' he stepped into the room to make sure. It was a box of his own, that he'd bought in New York! Purley had pinched it!

Without troublin' to hunt very far, Paddy discovered a bottle of Scotch; a couple of shirts that had hardly been worn; a pair of tan shoes; some socks an' a silk handkerchief—all his. By the time Purley came back from the store Paddy was just about ready to eat him.

"Purley," he says, "you're a —— despicable thief!"

He flung open the door of the room.

"Look! The cigars are mine an' the

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whisky's mine, an' the shoes are mine, an' the shirts are mine! What else have you got stowed away where I can't find it, eh?"

An' then Purley said he wasn't goin' to be called a thief for nothin'. The shirts an' the socks he'd taken to see if they wanted mendin', the bottle of whisky was one he'd bought for himself, an' the cigars had been given him by Paddy as a present, as had some cigarets which, he said, Paddy had maybe overlooked in his search! The shoes he was cleanin'!

The second mate who was in his room, list'nin', told me he'd paid good money, over an' over again, for a seat in a theatre without gettin' half the amusement he did then.

Did Paddy believe what the steward told him! He did not.

"Purley," he says, "you've been robbin' me all along, an' you know it!"

"No, sir," says Purley. "I've not. But," says he, "I won't put up with bein' accused for nothin'. I can't go another voyage with you after what you've been sayin'!"

"Good!" says Paddy. "An' the sooner you clear off the ship the better!"

An' then he went to his own room.

"A thief!" he says. "After all these years! I'm losin' my faith in humanity! It's terrible, terrible!"

Funny enough, Purley said almost the same identical words.

"After all these years," he says, stoppin' me just as I was goin' ashore, "an' then to be thrown aside like an old dish-cloth! To be told to clear off the ship! An' for nothin' at all! It's awful!"

We were bound to Middlesboro next mornin', early, for minor repairs, dry dock, bunkers an' a load of machinery.

"What are you goin' to do?" I asks.

"What can I do?" says Purley. "I've signed on. How can I leave the ship now without desertin', eh?"

Late that night Paddy came to my room.

"Harrington," he says, at the top of his voice, "wake up! Florence is goin' to marry me next time we're home! I'm the happiest man in the whole world!"

An without bein' asked he sat himself down on my settee an' told me everything, from beginnin' to end, what he'd said an' how Florence had answered him, an' how she'd looked when he'd asked her to be his wife; an' what wonderful happiness there was in her beautiful eyes; an' all that line of junk, till I fell asleep with him still talkin' on, nineteen to the dozen!

When we came back to West India Dock from Middlesboro a couple or so weeks later, the steward was still with us.

"He's a thief," says Paddy, "but he's the best steward I ever had, an' I wouldn't swap him for any one. Go with the ship?" he says when I asked him. "Go with the ship? Of course he'll go with the ship! Why not?"

An' that was that! Purley was forgiven an' all was harmony once more. Or so it seemed. You'd have thought, all the same, from lookin' at Purley an' seein' the way he went slinkin' around on his job, he was feelin' his shame. You'd have thought so, that is, till you got to talkin' with him an' heard his views on the old man!

FIRST afternoon we were back in London I was walkin' up the West India Dock Road once more when I came to Kishnard's, the barber's. I wanted a shave, so I went inside.

Miss Kishnard, the girl with the frizzy, gold hair, was pleased to see me. I was well, she hoped. An' so on. An' was Captain Burnbrook all right? He was goin' to be married, wasn't he? She'd heard some sailors talkin' about it. An old bachelor like him! An' then all of a sudden her manner was diff'rent.

"He's a mean old ——, your captain," she says. "A man like that ought to be locked up!"

I didn't understand what in the name of blazes she was drivin' at.

"Mean?" I says.

"Yes," says she, "you needn't pretend. You know what he is as well as I do! But, Mr. Harrington, you listen to me, he'll pay. You wait! He's a fine gentleman, isn't he? Well turned out! Well dressed! Well mannered! Kind hearted! Chuckin' his drinks an' his smokes round like a millionaire! I know what he is. All bluff an' bluster an' bounce! But they get landed all right in the end, don't they?"

An' then Kishnard, the barber, came to the door of the inner shop.

"Amy!" he says, "you drop it at once! See!"

He turned to me—

"Mr. Harrington, if you come inside I'll be ready in just one minute!"

It was the wig, of course. Old Paddy

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owed them money, an' they were scared that he wouldn't pay! All the same, I was puzzled. There was something about Miss Amy Kishnard that seemed to show she was plannin' trouble. An' trouble it was!

It wasn't till about noon next day that I met Paddy again. Like the last rose of Summer, wilted an' fadin' fast, an' with a look in his eyes that you see in a dead salmon's on a fishmonger's marble slab. He hadn't had any breakfast, he didn't want any dinner; he wasn't hungry.

"Well, Harrington," he says in a mournful way, "it's all over!"

He was so solemn I got it into my head at once that the widow had chucked him.

"Not Mrs. Mooring," I says, "surely?"

He smiled at me.

"No, Harrington," he says; "no."

An' then he explained that he'd been referrin' to his wild, gay bachelor days. He'd been givin' a farewell dinner to five other captains an' Cousin George. That's what was troublin' him.

"I'm goin' to settle down, Harrington," he says. "I'm goin' to marry the finest woman that ever breathed! I'm a lucky man. No more driftin' round with the crowd! ——!" he says. "I've an awful head on me! It's just splittin'!"

An' then he remembered what he'd wanted to say to me.

"Harrington, Florence is comin' aboard to tea. I'd like you to meet her. Four-thirty, sharp! She'll be punctual."

Tea parties aren't in my line, exactly, but I wanted to see the widow.

"I'll be delighted," I says. "Is Cousin George comin', by any chance?"

"He is," says Paddy. "Florence couldn't come here by herself. It wouldn't be proper. George will look after her."

An', though I couldn't imagine Cousin George lookin' after anything, not even his railway ticket from Fenchurch Street, I took it for granted they'd reach the ship. Florence, herself, was not what you'd call a chicken, I knew. She'd bring Cousin George aboard if she had to carry him.

"An' now," says Paddy, "I'm goin' to turn in for an hour or two. I'm tired. What's more," says he, "I've got to be at my best when Florence arrives. She's most particular, Florence is," says he. "I must do her credit!"

He went off, then, for his shut-eye. An' me, little knowin' what pleasure was waitin', I went down into the engine-room.

At four o'clock, about, I came out of my room where I'd been changin' into my best uniform in honor of Mrs. Mooring. It was a hot afternoon, scorchin' hot for England, an' there was a reg'lar dockside smell in the air of brown sugar an' molasses an' rum an' hot engine-room oil that made me think of the West Indies.

I stood by the rail lookin' at the lighters alongside, an' the sun on the water, an' the steamers on the other side of the dock, an' so on, half asleep an' drowsy, an' then all of a sudden I turned my head an' saw Purley climbin' the ladder that led to the lower bridge an' the old man's room.

I watched him, thinkin', of course, that he'd had his orders to wake Paddy Burnbrook up in time to get dressed. I saw him go into the room, an' then I wondered what state of mind Paddy'd be in when he saw Florence, an' whether his head was better, an' why Florence was goin' to marry him, an' whether she'd got any money or not, an' why Paddy was riskin' his future the way he was, at his age, an' if Cousin George intended to pay me my ten bob, an' so on, gettin' more an' more sleepy, an' hearin' nothin' except the winches rattlin' an' the noise of someone in the engine-room hammerin' an' the cook in the galley singin'. An' then, though I wasn't exactly asleep, I was more wide awake than I'd ever been in my life before. An' why?

I heard the most awful yell imaginable. Paddy! Paddy Burnbrook! Swearin' at the top of his voice! An' like a rabbit boltin' away from a dog—yes, it's the truth. From where I stood by the rail amidships, I saw Purley bolt from the old man's room with Paddy after him, in his trousers an' undervest only! An' listen, with his head as bald as a bladder of lard at a pork butcher's, but pink! Yes, it's the gospel truth!

Purley went down the port-ladder at one jump. Paddy was slower, of course, but I wouldn't have thought a man his size could have moved so fast! He was ravin' mad. Swearin'. His face purple. Before I could see what was happenin', quite, or what had led to the riot, the steward made a dive for the rail an' swung himself over an' slid down the rope that was tied to the lighter alongside. An' I caught a glimpse of his face as he went. He was scared!

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WITH luck he'd have reached the lighter. His luck was out. Just as he swung himself over the rail the lighterman, not lookin' for visitors, shoved off a bit. Purley yelled an' then stretched out his foot as he slid. No good! He missed the lighter an' fell slap into the water an' disappeared. An' Paddy! Paddy bellowed to the lighterman to hang on, an' then more by good luck than good judgment, he slid down the rope, too, an' landed right side up on the lighter.

An' there he stood, in his trousers an' undervest, the sun shinin' on the top of his pink, bald head, starin' down at the water where the steward had disappeared, with the whole of the crew of the *Hollyhock*, officers, deck hands, an' firemen, with a gang of stevedores an' cargomen, as well, linin' the rails, watchin'.

Old Paddy was usin' language, even for him.

"Come on up, you blankitty, blanked little blank!" he shouts. "Come on out of it, Purley, or I'll cut your blankitty, blanked heart out of you!" An' then the second steward began to blubber.

"Man overboard! Why don't somebody do something! He'll drown!" an' one of the deck hands dropped a lifebuoy over the side an' nearly hit Paddy an' Paddy cursed the lot of us for a crowd of grinnin' apes an' dived into the dock.

I dunno how long he was under, but it seemed like ten minutes before we saw the bald top of his head under water comin' to the surface, like a big round jellyfish. He'd got Purley around the neck, tight, an' we all of us yelled like mad an' there was, as you might say, a scene of unbounded rejoicin' on board the *Hollyhock*.

About the only one of the ship's company that showed no sign of joy was the captain. All he did was to look up at us an' tell us to stop that blank row an' see what about hoistin' him an' the steward out of the dock. Which we did, under the mate's directions, pretty well dead from wantin' to laugh an' not darin' to smile. An' all this time, mind, not a word to explain what in the name of thunder the old man was doin' in broad daylight without his wig.

But I tell you it would have been as much as our lives were worth, any of us, to have let Paddy think we saw anything out of the way in his appearance, as he reached the deck of the *Hollyhock* an' stood there, bald an' tragic an' fat, his vest an' trousers clingin' tight because of the wet an' showin' his shape.

Purley was pretty sick, but he wasn't dead. He lay on his back, white an' still, while the mate an' the second mate were bringin' him round by artificial respiration.

"What on earth's this?" says the mate. "A drowned kitten or what?"

Purley was holdin' something all wet an' hairy in his right hand.

"Give it here!" says Paddy. "At once!"

"He wasn't goin' to lose it, anyway," says the mate, not knowin' yet what it was that Purley had got. "——!" says he, "you'd need a hammer an' chisel to loosen his grip!"

An' then the steward's fingers opened an' we saw the cause of the whole trouble, Paddy's wig! Purley had stolen the old man's wig! An' now do you understand? But wait!

Paddy glared at the wig, like a man meetin' someone he doesn't quite know if he likes or not, then he looked at the crowd on deck.

"What the —— are you doin' here?" he says. "Get back to your work, the whole —— lot of you!"

An' then his eyes opened wide an' his jaw dropped an' he looked almost as sick as Purley himself.

"You!" he says. "You!"

I turned my head an' there at my elbow was Cousin George, lookin' more like a turnip than ever, an' with Cousin George a stout, middle-aged lady with dark hair an' pink cheeks an' a pale blue frock an' a dark blue hat! Florence, of course! I knew from the picture.

Well, that was how matters were. Can you see them? The old man, big an' fat, in his wet undervest an' trousers, his head bald, pink an' shinin' in the sun, his face gettin' redder an' redder, an' his expression more an' more mis'rable an' unhappy; an' the water makin' a puddle all round him; an' the widow, as stout as himself, starin' at him, dressed like a fashion plate out of a magazine, her hands clasped to her bosom, too frightened—or so it seemed—to know what to say or how to begin.

"Well," says Paddy. "Well, Florence, an' so you've come!"

"Yes," she says, tryin' to be cheerful. "I've come."

By now all that remained of the crowd

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ere the two mates an' myself an' Cousin eorge. All at once, as though he remem-ered he wasn't dressed, Paddy put on his ig, wet as it was, an' he groaned, as though ope had gone an' there was nothin' in life orth havin'.

"You know now," he says, "you've dis-overed my secret. It's off, of course. I'm orry. Your cousin will see you home, on't he?"

What happened then? Why something 'd not looked for. Mrs. Mooring went traight up to Paddy an' caught hold of his rm.

"Paddy," she says, "I think you're the ravest man that I ever knew. You're vonderful. You saved his life. I saw verything."

Most of us would have left it at that, atisfied. Not Paddy.

"No," he says. "I'm not brave. I didn't are if he drowned or not, I wanted my wig. He had it. That's why I went in after him! I wanted to keep you from knowin'. An' now it's too late."

He turned to leave us, but Mrs. Mooring an after him an' stopped him.

"Paddy," she says kind of desperate, "don't be silly. I'm not blind, Paddy! I knew all the time that you wore a wig! Did you think that I didn't?"

An' then—why then, I suppose, Paddy saw that it wasn't too late, after all!

We watched them walkin' away, side by side, talkin', toward the saloon. Cousin George put his hand to his mouth an' coughed.

"It's strange," he says, "but sentiment seems to give me a parched throat. Mr. Harrington," he says, "I wonder if I might trouble you for something to drink? I'm feelin' a little faint!"

Maybe I was weak—I don't know—but there was something about Cousin George I admired. Thinkin' it over afterward, I put him down as the King of Touchers! Before tea was over, he said he'd like to see me on deck. An' there he explained that he was short of cash, an' in case Florence wanted to take a taxi—an' so on!

The old story. He got five bob from me, an', so I heard later, ten from the mate, who didn't know him as well as I did.

Well, that's about all. No one saw Purley again, not on the *Hollyhock*, anyway. Before dark he was gone. What's more, he must have cleared all his gear off of the ship the day before so's to be ready to go at a minute's notice. There are ways you can cart things out of the dock gates, of course, police or no police! An' a man like Purley wasn't born yesterday afternoon, either.

But what did it all mean, eh? That's what we wanted to know.

"What did he do it for, eh?" says Paddy. "The wig had no value to him, had it? Did he think he was goin' to get me in bad with Florence, or what? What made him take that risk? He knew I was sleepin', yes. ——! He near as a tick did what he wanted to do? But what for? Revenge? Rubbish! He knew that I'd never worry about those things he stole! I'd forgotten 'em already.

"No," says Paddy, "there's something I don't understand. An' how did he know that I wore a wig at all? Eh? I won't forgive him, of course. Never. An' I actually saved his —— mis'rable little life!"

YOU know the old church at Limehouse, don't you? Stands back from the road, with a churchyard an' railin's, an' the railway the far side. Paddy an' I were passin' there the day before we were due to sail, just as a weddin' party was comin' along the path that led to the sidewalk where a carriage an' pair was waitin', with a driver with a white buttonhole.

"Here," says Paddy, who was beginnin' to take an int'rest in weddin's, "here, Harrington, let's stop an' see what they look like!"

An' then—well, if some bloke had cracked the back of my head with a foot of gas-pipe it wouldn't have been more of a knock out!

An' the same with Paddy. An' why? I'll tell you. The bride, dressed in white with white flowers an' all complete, was Amy Kishnard, the barber's sister. An' the bridegroom was Purley, late chief steward of the *Hollyhock!* An' the best man, in a frock coat, five sizes too large for him, an' a top hat, was Kishnard, the barber!

I believe, honest to goodness, if it hadn't been for the bride, the bridegroom an' best man would have turned an' bolted! But she kept on her way, smilin' as usual, though maybe a trifle nervous. Nervous, for her, anyway! When she reached us, she bowed.

"How are you, captain?" she says. "How are you, Mr. Harrington?"

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I dunno who was the redder, the old man or Purley. As for the barber, he was more pale than I'd seen him.

We watched the bride an' the bridegroom climb into the carriage. Before they moved off the bride put her head out of the window an' beckoned.

"Captain Burnbrook," she says in a soft little voice you could hardly hear, "thank you!"

"What for?" says Paddy.

An' then I saw she was serious.

"It was my fault," she says. "It was me that persuaded Robert"—Robert was Purley's name—"me that persuaded Robert," she says, "to take that wig back from you. See? I dunno whether I'm sorry or not, but," she says, takin' Paddy's hand in hers, "I want to say now that I'll never forget what you've done for me, an' I'm grateful, an' so is Bob, though he's too frightened to say so."

"Well," says Paddy, no more at his ease than she was, "if you'd get to the point maybe I'd understand."

"If you hadn't gone into the dock after him," says the girl, "I'd have lost my man. He'd have drowned, for he can't swim. An' I think I'd have died. An', Captain Burnbrook," she says, "I'm sorry we showed you up like we did before Mrs. Mooring. I never knew she was comin' aboard when I told Bob to do what he did do!"

An' then she shook hands with Paddy an' I'm blessed if there weren't tears in her eyes! An' then they drove off. An' when we looked round the barber had vanished!

Paddy stood starin' after the carriage, not sayin' a word till it was out of sight. Presently he says—

"I won't pay for the wig, of course, but I'll send her the money tonight!"

"What for?" I asks.

"A weddin' present," says he. "What else do you think? Harrington," he says, "you can take it from me, compared with a woman a man's like a new born babe!"

An' me! I didn't argue. What Paddy had said was the truth, I knew.

INDIAN OCCUPATIONS AND DIVERSIONS

***by* Frank H. Huston**

I HAVE often been asked how the plains tribes passed their time when not engaged in the pleasant pastime, to them, of raising particular Hades and hair.

The Indian when away from the degenerating influence of the whites was a most sociable and hospitable being, fond of joking, "town meetings," dances of both religious and social kinds, visiting, not only from house to house as it were, but in whole bands to other villages and tribes.

Games and gambling, in particular horse-racing, were a favorite diversion. The noble game now known as African golf was and is a peculiarly American Indian institution, played with dice made from plum-stones and thrown by hand into a grass basket. Then there were the Awl Game, known to the Arapahos as *Ne-baku-tha-na*, or *Tsona*, which was more a woman's game, and was a crude form of parchesi; and *Bati Qtuba*, or the lance-throwing, a slender rod thrown with a gliding motion along the ground, played by both sexes and all ages. The hunt-the-button, or guess game, was universal, both sexes joining and spending hours guessing who had the little bone used in place of the button of the whites' game.

Horse-racing would require an article in itself. Seldom there was a pleasant day but some one would be occupied in winning another's possessions by this means, and sometimes whole bands would be arrayed against each other with all their property wagered on their favorite ponies.

Always some of the younger men were absent, seeking to "lift" horses from alien tribes, or to take scalps if possible and gain the coveted right to wear the *waku*—feather symbol of manhood and a warrior.

In season the women gathered roots and berries, prepared the robes and skins, and pounded and bagged *wasna*, or, as it is called by whites, pemmican. Breaking horses and the manufacture of saddles, riatas, arrows, bows, lances, and equipment for war and hunting, took up a large part of the men's time.

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There were the Fall and Spring buffalo-ınts, ceremonial affairs conducted under :e direction of the medicine-men and as :r ritual; at other times single hunters were ways in the field.

Amatory affairs occupied the younger, ıd, if the truth is told, at times also ıe elder, elements. The manner differed ith the tribes, but in principle it was no ifferent from that of the average lover of ıy color. Married women were however ee to court a man in the presence of their wn husbands whom custom required to ppear to hear nothing and see less; this as of advantage in preventing abuse of he women and constituted an easy way of ivorce. But wo betide him who courted woman not in her husband's presence; hat was not considered good form and was sually adjudicated with a knife.

Whenever two Indians meet, they in-ariably form a circle and smoke. It is aid one Indian with a pipe will build a fire nd form a circle all by himself. Groups night be seen at all times thus occupied, ınd in the Winter the "Teller of Tales" went rom teepee to teepee to amuse and instruct nd thus preserve the legends of the peo-ple. They were prime favorites with the vomen and children and seldom missed a neal.

Councils occupied the elder men and hiefs, burdened with the affairs of the illage or tribe, and troubled with the irri-ating and exasperating whites, who were ıniversally from our point of view, liars and hieves and drunkards.

Fundamentally, the life of a village was hat of a similar community of any people, white, red, yellow or black.

Dancing was frequent and varied. In ome, as the Omaha, or Grass Dance, both sexes participated, and it could be held at ny time or place. Each warrior and reli-gious degree had their own peculiar dance, and none but the initiate could take part, some even being held in secret. War and scalp dances need no explanation; but the great religious rite of the Sun Dance, the *Bi-gush-ish Ba-taat-t* of the Arapahos, was a ceremony of expiation of a vow and required certain time and essentials for its celebration. Those who have seen the Flagellantes of New Mexico or the Hindoo fakirs of India may get a faint idea of the meaning of this dance.

Sniping the soldiers around a military post was a favorite diversion of the young bucks, as was also the running-off of the troopers' horse-herds. Although both the Cheyenne and Arapaho were disposed to be friends with the whites they were not permitted to follow their inclinations and by the very people they wished to placate, were forced to protect themselves, their country and their property.

Making and repairing of *mokwahs*, *cumpahs*, or in the Algonquin language *moccasins*, was a never-ending task, as the grandmothers of the readers of this article were similarly occupied with the stockings of their families.

Preparing sweet-scented grasses and the inner bark of the red willow for mixing with tobacco, preparing the article and then painting the person, and making pipe-bowls out of the red sandstone from the bluffs of the Missouri, took more of the Indians' time. Still more time went in hunting out and eradicating the "white men" from one's clothing; for the cootie was unknown until introduced by the whites, and among many tribes the same name was given the two pests. For instance, *nia thu* in Arapaho means "white man" and "cootie" alike.

And so all that I could reply to the questioners was—

"Oh, just about like any other people only a little different; they lived, moved, loved, fought and died."

And when you think it over, that is about all that any people do.

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TASCOSA

BY FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

Author of "The Warriors of the Pecos," "The Warriors of the Canadian," etc.

IN THE good old days before the coming of the long-horned cattle and the bold-eyed cowboys, before the buffalo hunters invaded the Llano Estacado with their deadly Sharps rifles; the days when the Comanches, Cheyennes and Kiowas claimed the Texas Panhandle as their hunting grounds; in those days Tascosa was born. Like a child which has come into this world because of lawless desires it spent its infancy without a name. Its existence was, in fact, a secret not without its scandal; and, quite consistently, was due to the meeting of red men and white.

It was not then a town; nor yet a camp; but a mere rendezvous on the north bank of the Canadian. Hither Mexican traders from old Taos drove their laden pack-mules once every year. With them they brought colored calicoes, beads, powder, lead—and the potent wheat whisky for which their town was famous. This last they hid carefully at some distance from their camp and bided the arrival of the Indians.

Now the savages drifted in across the Staked Plains and the traces of the war-paint still showed upon their cheeks; some of the scalps that hung beside their rawhide saddles smelled of fresh blood. Comanches and Kiowas for the most part, with now and then a group of rugged Cheyennes or a handful of venomous-eyed Apaches, they brought their loot of ponies and sore-footed cattle from the settlements beyond the Llano. They pitched their teepees and the bartering began.

It was so many yards of calico for a sound young horse and so much gunpowder for a cow, all according to the difficulty of obtaining ammunition and the nearness of the owners whose brands adorned the animals. Always the establishment of these ratios was prefaced by long haggling with interludes of silence during which pipes were passed from mouth to mouth in grim solemnity. During this preliminary proceeding the whisky was mentioned; its fiery virtues were described; it became a bait, the more alluring because of its absence, and as such it was dangled before the imaginations of the savages.

Once there had been a meeting when the liquor accompanied the transactions of which it was the *pelon;* but the members of that trading party never returned to Taos, and their descendants had no fancy to let their scalps hang from Comanche lodge poles beside those of their rash ancestors. They did their trafficking without any dangerous refreshments, and when the last animal had been bargained for, the new owners departed with the herds leaving a man or two behind them.

These delegates, who were always seasoned old hands at the business, waited for three days to give the cattle a good start. Then they took the Indians to the cache where the liquor had been hidden, showed them their *pelon*, mounted—and rode away as fast as their horses could carry them. For, as has been said, the wheat whisky of Taos was famous for its potency, and the

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rd brothers were equally famous for the riftness with which they forgot their anners, once they took a drink.

In this way Tascosa became a landmark the wide lands of the free grass. In time veral well-to-do Mexican families came ther from Santa Fé and Taos; they built ieir adobe houses, and the landmark was ow one of those plazas which existed during ie sixties and early seventies. Parties of varthy lancers on their way to and from ie annual meat hunts stopped over, to do bit of trading and to dance with the girls a *baille* while the strumming of the guitars robbed through the blue-black Summer ight.

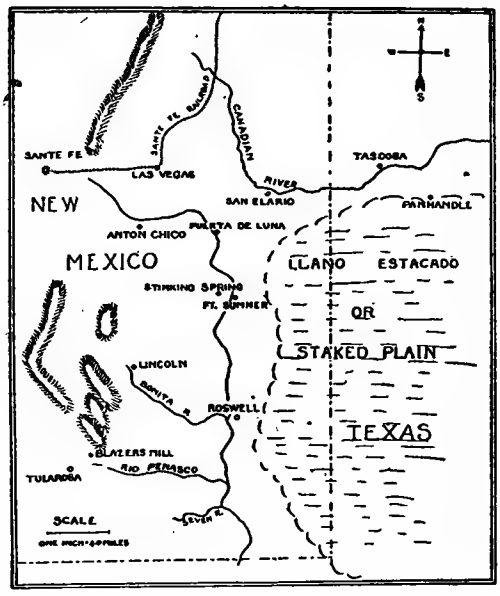
In 1876 the white buffalo hunters crossed ie Arkansas and pressed on southward, ivading this land which the Indians had alled their own. At Adobe Walls, a little iore than a hundred miles to the east, they ought the savages to a standstill one day hat Summer and later they bested them t Casa Amarillo; after which the blue-clad avalry completed what they had begun. he red men retired to the Indian Territory, nd the rugged hide-hunters set to work xterminating the last bison herds.

They drove the lancers of Taos and Santa é from the Staked Plains; it was their ange, they said, by right of conquest; by orce of arms they held it. In the year of heir advent one of their number, Henry M. Kimball, built a blacksmith shop and a corral at Tascosa; and early the next season Roberts & Rinehart's store was standing beside it. By 1878 the cowmen were coming in, and they made the place their round-up headquarters.

There was now a post-office, and those who established it christened it Atascosa, which means "boggy ford," for the crossing of the Canadian was dangerous from quicksands. But the department refused to allow the name because of Atascosa County down in southern Texas, and they solved the problem by dropping the initial A.

Thus the cattlemen of the Canadian adopted Tascosa for their own; and for some time it grew up very much like any other waif of the plains under similar circumstances, which is to say that it waxed strong and lusty and did not behave itself because there was no one about to make it mind.

During this halcyon period every man made his own rules of conduct and enforced them if he was able to do so. A killing was



the end of complications then instead of the beginning, as is now the case. When Jule Howard slew Bob Russel they buried the cowboy in Old Man Rinehart's pasture and thought no more about it. The headboard was the first in Tascosa's boot hill. A few Mexicans who went the same way as young Russel were given sepulture in the Casamero Romero, the Ortega Plaza and the south side Potrero; wherefore it happened that in the livelier days to come the town boasted no less than four grim little frontier cemeteries. But shooting scrapes were as yet infrequent, though there was much powder burned in joyous celebration.

The men of the Canadian were for the most part dead shots; and every one realized that he who reached for his gun in anger must be prepared to see the thing right through. The seasons passed; now and again the creaking wagons of the freighters brought lumber from Dodge City, two hundred and fifty miles to the northward; new buildings gathered about the initial handful. And in the Winter of 1880-1881 there came a change.

News traveled slowly in the Panhandle at that time, and this was particularly true after snow began to fly, for few riders crossed the country in cold weather and most of the cowboys were "holed up" in dug-outs. With the green grass came various range activities culminating in the Spring round-up; all of which kept the

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average man so busy that June was well along before he had a chance to look about him and find out what his neighbors had been doing.

IT WAS on a June morning in 1881 that a number of cowboys who had not seen the town since the previous Autumn rode in to Tascosa to spend their wages.

Among them were Jim East and Charley Siringo, who had spent the Winter over in New Mexico hunting down Billy the Kid's band of outlaws; Tom Monroe and Charley Coffee, whose outfits had been working away down to the southward, and young Fred Leigh, a new hand on the L. X.; he had smelled powder, so they say, in Lampasas County when the Higgins and the Herald factions were at war. The members of this quintet hung pretty closely together.

Like men who greet an old friend after long absence by slapping him on the back, they were renewing acquaintance with the place. But Time has a faculty of bringing developments of character which do not show upon the surface, as more than one has learned who clapped a former boon companion between the shoulders.

Unmindful of any such possibility, the five drifted joyously from one establishment to another, taking in those evidences of Tascosa's growth which were visible—a restaurant, a real saloon with a range of mountains and a waterfall painted on the back-bar mirror; and Mrs. Turner's boarding-house with Mrs. Turner's ducks disporting themselves in the front yard, a spectacle which warmed their hearts with pride. No use talking, they told one another, Tascosa was growing real civilized; at this rate she would soon outstrip Mobeetie and assume her proper position as the Panhandle's metropolis. They took another drink in honor of the ducks.

Still oblivious of the new conditions which were of greater import than ducks or boarding-houses they sauntered on, adding to their wardrobes various purchases in the way of neckerchiefs and filigreed boots and to their liquid cargoes such libations as came their way. Noontime found them in Jack Ryan's new saloon indulging in the good old pastime of shooting at one another's hats.

Their big single-action revolvers shook the close walls with their bellowing; the hats flew upward through the smoke wreaths with slim red tongues of flame yearning after them from the wicked muzzles. And then the personification of the new conditions with which they had not reckoned appeared in the doorway.

"Hello!" one cried. "Here's Cape Willingham."

He was of their breed, a rider of the wide free-grass lands, and they greeted him with loud acclaim. In the midst of it they saw the bit of polished nickel which he was wearing on his vest, and their eyes widened with surprize.

"How's this?" they demanded. "Sheriff?"

"Sheriff," he told them. "This here's Oldham County now, boys. We done organized last Winter."

There followed a moment of awkward silence—just such a moment as ensues when one has slapped the back of a man who has, during one's absence, gained dignity. They were digesting the tidings when Cape Willingham spoke again.

"Reckon you all better put up them guns," he said.

One or two of his audience consigned themselves to eternal perdition by way of expressing their wonderment and young Fred Leigh, who had a drink or two the better of his comrades, gave his profanity greater poignancy by directing it toward the sheriff. The latter retained the impassivity which abides with those owning high authority.

"It's against the law to shoot up the town," he further enlightened them, "and I'll have to take you fellows to Marion Armstrong—he's justice of the peace."

The five filed to the bar and turned their firearms over to the man behind it. The sheriff led them to the cabin where the newly appointed justice held court.

"What's the damages, judge?" they demanded.

Marion Armstrong was a good Methodist, and he did not know the taste of whisky, but there were certain factors in this case to mitigate any natural intolerance which he might feel. By custom as old as the State of Texas, the men behind the bars expected the bulk of the wages which filled the pockets of those five pairs of jean breeches at this post-round-up season; and the prosperity of Tascosa was not lightly to be trifled with by one who hoped for reelection. He opened a yellow-backed

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volume of statutes and gazed intently on its pages, the while he weighed these things in his mind.

"I'll let you-all off with five dollars apiece and costs," he announced finally.

They paid their fines and departed swiftly, for thirst was growing on them; and while they were downing the first drink, at the sheriff's expense, young Fred Leigh took occasion to denounce the new conditions. He was, he said, about to leave Tascosa, where such things as this had come to pass. Within a few minutes he made good his word and rode away to his outfit, which was encamped a few miles out of town. With him he took a bottle or two to bear him company.

LEIGH was, as has been said, young, and moreover he was one of those luckless ones whom whisky makes belligerent. During the course of the ride what had been an aggravating incident grew and grew until it became a deep grievance. So he came riding back to town again a few hours later, and while he was loping his pony down the main street a large idea inflamed him; it was to defy the sheriff, the long-nosed justice of the peace and the statutes of the sovereign State of Texas. He came shooting, and his eye fell on Mrs. Turner's ducks.

They were, as in the morning, disporting themselves in the Turner front yard. There was a tantalizing suggestion in the sight which went to his head like the whisky. It is altogether probable that he did not notice Mrs. Turner, who was, to use the parlance of the day, riding herd on them; for the cowboy did not exist in the Panhandle who would wilfully frighten a good woman. The ducks were targets to set the trigger-finger of a sober man to itching; and he was already burning his powder.

He managed to slay two of them, got the clock in the front room for good measure and let out the long yell. At which juncture Mrs. Turner fainted.

The quartet in Jack Ryan's saloon heard the shots, and they were ready for him when he leaped from his horse to join them.

"Get his gun," they told one another, "before Cape Willingham comes along."

They gathered round him with that intention, but drink had made him suspicious and he eluded them. In the midst of it some one ran into the place with the news that the sheriff was on his way down the street with his double-barreled shotgun.

"Lemme go," Fred Leigh demanded. "I've smelt powder before. I can handle him or a dozen like him."

They increased their efforts, but to no avail. The sheriff's form loomed in the doorway and they fell back from the luckless puncher as the latter's hand swept toward his forty-five.

"Hands up!"

Cape Willingham had barely time to speak the formula made and provided by custom for such cases, before the revolver was drawn. The shotgun roared and Fred Leigh pitched forward, a sacrifice on the altar of progress. They buried him the next day in the boot hill which had been Old Man Rinehart's pasture, and Mrs. Turner with her daughters, Vic and Mollie, stood beside Jim East at the funeral.

When the smoke of Cape Willingham's shotgun cleared away in Jack Ryan's saloon that June afternoon a new situation was revealed; the law had come to Tascosa; one conformed or one faced large consequences. The four young warriors of the Canadian had seen fit to conform. It was, in good part, a sense of justice that withheld their hands from their revolvers.

They realized that their luckless companion had—as they would express it—got what was coming to him; and they cherished no resentment against his slayer. Furthermore they owned that spirit which makes a man respect the rights of others; if the community wanted the statutes of the State of Texas, why, all right—providing of course things did not go too far.

In the same spirit Cape Willingham's constituency acquiesced. To the newly organized County of Oldham were attached ten others as yet unorganized, a bailiwick including the western half of the Panhandle. Its population consisted of former buffalo hunters, narrow-eyed old Indian fighters, cattlemen of the breed that grew up after the Civil War in Texas, accustomed to making their own rules of action and defining their own rights of property; and cowboys who were hired to enforce the edicts of their employers with forty-fives and Winchesters.

Not a few of these men had done some fast riding to avoid legal arguments in older communities; and many of them were still decidedly careless in their use of rope and

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branding-iron. To the average citizen the law appealed as an abstract proposition, but he didn't intend to let the sheriff step on his toes. And this was particularly true when he came to town.

There is no doubt that if Cape Willingham had been like some peace officers who carved larger niches in the Old West's Hall of Fame, he would have burned a good deal of powder, provided he had lasted long enough. But he understood his people and did not try to crowd things. He introduced that rule of action—which Blackstone so naively says defines what is right and prohibits what is wrong—in very much the same manner as a good horseman bridles a raw colt. Which is to say that he went about it very slowly and when the community reared and plunged a bit, he did not take the matter too seriously.

In the beginning came the problem of dealing with the lithe young riders whose visits brought a large share of Tascosa's prosperity. To shoot up a town was a Southwestern custom; it was like the Fourth of July or Thanksgiving; and men do not lightly give up such things. Yet the handful of merchants and householders demanded the change. That the tragic incident in Jack Ryan's saloon was not followed by many others was due in part to the sheriff's hard sense and in part to the topography of the county seat.

By a process of natural gravitation, which seems to take place in every new camp, the stores and the more sedate saloons hung to the summit of the first bench-land while the dance-halls lay clustered beneath the hill. To those buoyant spirits who must turn loose with their big-caliber revolvers while they were getting rid of their wages, the word went out: Shoot as much as you please in Hogtown but when you reach the top of the grade keep your weapons in the holsters.

So it came that the lower town settled most of its misdemeanor cases by itself. Here the lights burned until the rays of the newly risen sun bathed the river bottom, and during the nights of the post round-up season the thumping of the pianos was punctuated by the bellowing of the cowboys' forty-fives.

To shoot the French heels from the girls' shoes was regarded as an entirely legitimate pastime provided the marksmanship was good and the marksman was willing to pay for new footgear. Sometimes, of course, a mirror was offered up in sacrifice to a visitor's overflowing spirits. Not infrequently a rider just in after long months on the wide reaches of the Llano found himself in the grip of surging emotions to which nothing less than shooting out the lights would give proper vent. And on occasion there were challenges and deeds at arms.

At such times the sheriff was called as arbiter and when he had assessed the damages, or induced the belligerents to put away their weapons, all hands lined up before the bar to ratify his judgment by two libations, one at his expense and one "on the house."

There was a fiddler in one of these establishments by the name of Snake Thomson who had drifted down into the country from Dodge City in the early days to build himself a cabin by the Rifle Pits on the North Paladuro. Here he had established what was then known as a whisky ranch; and, as freight rates were high, he had brewed his own stock after a recipe furnished by some amateur chemist.

What ingredients he used were never known, but they must have been potent, for when he tried out the concoction on his first customer, a passing buffalo hunter, the man took one drink and died. Whereat the other buffalo hunters drove the proprietor out of the country because, they maintained, he had put snake heads in his liquor.

Hence the name Snake Thomson; although there were some who called him Dobe Jake, having seen him in Old Fort Clarendon making adobe bricks for a living subsequent to the episode of the venomous whisky. He fiddled well, and his music had much to do with keeping the dance-hall crowded; but the bullets from the revolvers of the male partners often buzzed so closely by his ears as to mar his execution somewhat. The waltzes began to limp, the quadrilles were marred by inharmonious passages. So he built himself a platform at shoulder height and beside it drew a line in charcoal on the white-washed wall, which he surmounted by a printed legend to the effect that he whose lead flew above the mark must be prepared to meet reprisals. And, to bear out his statement, he kept his Winchester beside his chair where all could see it. Thereafter he fiddled undisturbed.

At first there was no jail, and malefactors were housed in such quarters as the sheriff

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could commandeer, which was all right when it came to felons—for almost any one was willing to take his turn in guarding a horse thief—but sometimes brought problems in misdemeanor cases.

IT WAS during this period before the iron bars that old Jack Martin fell afoul of the law. A grizzled giant of six feet three with a yellow walrus mustache, he had in years gone by been a Government scout. *En route* from Fort Lyons, Colorado, to Camp Supply in the Indian Territor yon some perilous mission or other he had carried with him for sustenance a pound of crackers and a two-gallon jug of whisky.

Naturally he missed his way, leaving his destination off to the left, and wandered down into the black-jack ridges by the Cimarron. There, as the old phrase so vividly puts it, he "got snaky." In this condition a war-party of Comanches found him and listened to his descriptions of fantastic visions with deep respect, thinking him mad. Wherefore, according to the tenets of their superstitions, they did him no harm but convoyed him to a point within sight of the nearest military post and let him go on his way.

The incident had its effect on him; what had heretofore been a mere leaning toward liquor became a profound conviction of its virtues. But as he grew older there came upon him when in drink a disposition toward overfreeness with his firearms; and on a cold December evening in 1881, the sheriff was routed out of bed by a hurry call from Jack Ryan's saloon.

He arrived after the old-timer had driven every one in the place to cover, and, by slipping in behind him, managed to disarm him. This accomplished, the question arose, what to do with the prisoner. The sheriff considered.

"Reckon we'll have to picket him out till morning," Cape Willingham finally decided.

Some one brought a rawhide rope, and they tethered the old warrior to one of the posts which supported the low roof. They brought him a blanket, left a good fire in the stove, and Jack Ryan closed up the place for the night.

But they had failed to take into account the inventiveness of one who had been obliged to shift for himself in many an emergency, that and a skill with the riata which every good Texan owned in those days. When the proprietor unlocked his doors the next morning he was confronted by a scene of desolation.

"You boys will have to drink the barreled stuff," Jack Ryan explained to his customers that day. "Ol' Jack Martin done tore that blanket into strips last night and roped every bottle off'n the back bar with it."

During the next Spring they built the court-house and the little rock jail; and in the April term of court Jack Ryan was sitting on a jury. The defendant was charged with murder and the affair was finely enough drawn to make the usual plea of self-defense somewhat questionable. The twelve men repaired to a rear room on the upper floor and balloted with the result of eleven for acquittal and one for conviction.

"And I'm here to tell you, boys," said Jack Ryan who had cast the lone vote, "that I aim to stick till —— freezes over."

He was abiding by his word twenty-four hours afterward, and the members of the jury were regarding one another in gloomy silence when a tapping drew their attention to a rear window. They saw a head outlined against the sash. It was Ryan's partner, Frank James.

"Oh, Jack," he whispered, "come here a minute." And when the other had complied, "The's a big poker game on in the saloon," he went on breathlessly, "and they've got the bank roll faded."

Jack Ryan drew a thick sheaf of bills from his pocket and thrust it to his partner; then he sat down and considered deeply.

"Gentlemen," he said at length, "in such a serious case as this with eleven of you voting one way, I'm willing to waive my convictions. Let's have another ballot and be blame quick about it, too."

Half an hour later Tascosa's mill of justice had finished its grinding, and Ryan was back in the saloon opening a jackpot on a pair of aces.

BY THE time Willingham's term came to an end conditions were changing in the Panhandle; new outfits were establishing themselves along the Canadian; the range was growing more crowded; Eastern and British capital was coming into the country and the era of the absent owners was beginning. The good old

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days when every cowman knew cattle and their ways from long experience, the days when every cowboy was blindly loyal to his employer, were nearing their end.

With the dawning of the new period came uneasiness; there were mutterings of dissatisfaction out on the Llano; rumors of systematic rustling. Things were getting complicated. And Tascosa had flourished like the proverbial green bay-tree; it was now a roaring cowtown with the inevitable camp followers in its purlieus and on the summit of the hill the inevitable increase in respectability.

Such times of change, with their accompaniment of conflict between the old and the new, demand wise rulers; and although there were the courts, the sheriff was the active administrator of justice. On his personality depended the peace of the community. So, when election drew near, the men of Oldham County looked about them for one who could keep his head amid the bickerings of factions. They picked Jim East.

With the years he had developed. Among the wild young riders who journeyed northward to the Canadian in the early days, ready for fight or frolic as the case might be, he had cast his lot with those who battled for the rights of person and property. A prestige which had followed him from old gunfighting times down on the border had grown the brighter when he had helped to capture Billy the Kid over on the Pecos in the Winter of '80-81. And since his return to Tascosa on that June day when young Fred Leigh died with his boots on, he had steadied down, as the old saying has it.

Materially he had prospered to the point where he now owned the Equity Saloon in partnership with Frank James; which means that he was a solid and respected citizen. Moreover he was married now, a householder. That width of experience which enabled him to understand the ways of those who "swung a wide loop" as well as he understood the ways of those who wanted to settle their property rights by lawsuits, had much to do with his election. Also he was just as handy as ever with his six-shooter.

So he was sworn into office and held forth two terms during which Tascosa saw its wildest times.

In this medieval period of his administrations there were many who found it hard to keep step with the march of events. The case of Ches Smith offers a good illustration.

Not long after the building of the new court-house he rode in from Dallam County, one of the old breed and accustomed to celebrate his town-comings in the good old-fashioned manner. So, when he had taken aboard the necessary liquid cargo he entered Hogtown's largest dance-hall with the announcement that he was a wolf and this was his night to howl. When he had howled to his own complete satisfaction, he shot up the place so thoroughly that a goodly number of its inmates departed by way of the windows. After which Jim East was sent for and assessed the damages; all hands lined up before the bar according to the usual custom; and Ches Smith decided to call it a day. He sought a caravansary kept by one Rocking Chair Emma and went to sleep.

When he awakened, with that thirst which passes our latter-day understanding, he went forth like a true Texan and tried a hair of the dog that had bitten him; with the result that inside of the hour he was back at the dance-hall with his revolver flaming. He made a thorough job of it, and when weariness again overtook him he sought his bed once more.

The sheriff did not appear in Hogtown on this second occasion. There was ample reason for his absence. The board of equalization had gathered from the counties in the western side of the Panhandle and as tax collector it was his duty to be present at the meeting.

Proceedings opened, and Judge Willis of the district court, who was presiding, called the roll. The members answered, all but one. The commissioner from Dallam County was not present.

"Come to think of it, judge," a delegate said, "he done died last Winter."

The announcement brought a problem; for the statutes were explicit in the statement that every county must be represented, else all proceedings would be illegal. Judge Willis looked through the yellow-backed volumes in the hope of discovering some loophole, but his search was in vain.

"Mr. Sheriff," he asked at length, "isn't there any one in town from Dallam county?"

Jim East took thought and recalled the incident of the dance-hall.

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"Ches Smith was here last night," he replied.

Every one knew that the visitor's name did not adorn the tax roll; in fact Ches Smith's entire property consisted of his saddle, blanket-roll and arms. But in such extremities men can not afford to be overparticular.

"Go and bring him in," the judge commanded, and the sheriff departed on his quest.

He cut the celebrant's trail at the devastated dance-hall and followed it to the hostelry of Rocking Chair Emma. Ches Smith yawned hideously and regarded his caller through half-opened eyes. He saw the star and his mind leaped to a logical conclusion.

"What's the damages this time?" he demanded.

Jim East attempted explanations, but the mention of Judge Willis' name confirmed the somnolent Smith in his belief. He knew nothing, and cared as little, about the county's fiscal affairs, and the longer the sheriff talked the more firmly was he convinced that the dance-hall episode lay behind this visit.

"You name the figger and I'll pay," he declared finally, "but I don't aim to go up before no court."

And he started to pull his gun to back up the assertion. Time was passing, and there were a good many things to be attended to in that board meeting. Jim East realized the futility of further argument. So he disarmed the now thoroughly belligerent Smith and by force he took him to the court-room.

"Sit down," he said and pointed to a chair.

Ches Smith seated himself and blinked at Judge Willis. He glanced about the room, and it occurred to him that he must have raised a deal of havoc to attract so large a crowd to his trial.

"Stand up." The judge was speaking. "Raise your right hand."

He did so; and when the oath had been administered:

"Sure," he replied. "Now how much is it?"

The court ignored him, and he sank back into his seat. The board of equalization went to work at the tax roll and forgot all about the drafted member, who harkened eagerly for some time to catch a word which would enlighten him as to whom he had slain. The room was warm. Drowsiness overcame him.

When the taxes of the eleven counties had been adjusted the session adjourned; all hands repaired to the Equity Bar, where they were enjoying the sheriff's hospitality when Ches Smith entered the swinging doors. He approached Judge Willis a little apprehensively; his hand was in his pocket.

"Judge," he asked in a whisper, "how much did you soak me?"

THERE were times, however, when the conflict of old customs and new conditions confronted the sheriff with more delicate problems than the drumming-up of a county commissioner pro tem. And it is worth while in passing to note the fact that many of his constituents were willing to meet him half-way when it came to solving some of these diplomatic difficulties.

One who did not stand so high in the estimation of his fellow men would have failed to get this consideration, of which a notable instance is recorded in the affair of Ed Norwood.

His other name—the one with which he was born—does not matter, and the fact that there was one is mentioned merely because it has to do with the story. That he dispensed with it was due to some uncharitable grand jury in southern Texas whose members had a narrow prejudice against the plea of self-defense. So as Ed Norwood he came to the Panhandle with a trail herd in the early days. During that period his brother drifted into the country.

THE years went by. The brother had stuck by the name which his parents owned; the range was wide, and few of its riders ever knew of the relationship. So it came to pass that when Johnnie Maley slew this brother of Ed Norwood in Tascosa neither he nor Sally Emory so much as suspected that there was any one in the Panhandle whose filial affection for the victim would urge him to act in the role of a Nemesis.

The murder was of a foulness to warrant hanging its doer as high as Haman.

Sally Emory, who was among the bedizened entertainers in Jess Jenkins' dance-hall, played the part of Delilah; and Ed Norwood's brother was asleep when Johnnie Maley left his work of serving drinks in the

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Jenkins establishment to steal up to the cabin and put a bullet through the cowboy's brain. There was official investigation; the facts were plain enough for any to see, but of legal proof there was none. The guilty pair went free and deemed themselves secure.

Ed Norwood did not even come into town for the funeral. He said no word to any man, but remained out on the range for several months until all talk of the affair had blown over.

Then he came to Tascosa. He put his horse in Jim East's corral—for the sheriff was his friend from the old days back in southern Texas—and he hurried to Jess Jenkins' dance-hall. There he drank deeply, or at least he made a good show of so doing, and he danced with Sally Emory. He danced with her many times, and, as one far gone in liquor, he boasted of his "stake;" he flourished gold—it was for gold that the bartender had slain his brother—and finally he let himself appear to yield to drowsiness. By which means he attained his end and lay, as one deep in slumber, on the same bed where his brother had been slain.

He lay there for a long time, but for some reason the bartender did not come. At last Norwood grew impatient; he went back into the dance-hall where Johnnie Maley was busy serving drinks, and shot him through the heart.

The smoke had not cleared from the long room before the cowboy was on his way to Jim East's corral. He was saddling his pony when the sheriff came and explained that friendship has its limitations. The arrest was made without any trouble, and when the April term of court opened, the prisoner told his story to the grand jury.

For some reason or other that body voted an indictment charging first-degree murder.

It was good law, but the cowmen of the Canadian felt no less anger because of the fact. This, they told one another, was crowding things too far. There were about three hundred of them in Tascosa at the June round-up meeting, and they discussed the question of what to do about it. If they had not owned that respect for Sheriff Jim East they would have hit upon a solution without any trouble or loss of time; but as things stood they did not want to embarrass him by making him party of the third part at a jail delivery.

Not only that but, knowing him as they did, they were confident that such a proceeding would be accompanied with quite a bit of flying lead. The choice of killing a respected friend or being killed by his sawed-off shotgun did not appeal to them somehow. There was much quiet debating before they hit upon a way out of the dilemma.

That evening Sheriff Jim East went to his rest congratulating himself that the town was keeping remarkably quiet. But his first slumbers were interrupted with a rude suddenness that brought him out of bed in one leap. It was evident from the number of shots that the day's quiet had been but the precursor of a bigger storm than was usual even in Hogtown, whence the noise came. On his way down the street the sheriff overtook his deputy, L. C. Pierce, who, like his chief, bore his sawed-off shotgun.

The battle was raging when they reached the dance-hall of Jess Jenkins, and there must have been forty men engaged. Guns were flaming through windows and from behind overturned tables. To shoot into the mêlée without warning was out of the question. The officers entered the doors with leveled weapons and calling the old command—

"Hands up!"

The shooting stopped; the order was complied with. There was some delay in certain quarters of course, but such reluctance was always to be expected and it gave way before the menace of the two pairs of muzzles. At last peace was restored, and there was a comparative degree of quiet.

"Now what's the matter?" the sheriff demanded.

He got, as usual, various versions, and proceeded calmly to adjudicate. Before he had done there came to him, as a faint breath of suspicion, the feeling that something was wrong. Thus far the play, as he would have put it, had been coming mighty fast; but now, with time for reflection, it did not look exactly right. For one thing—where were the dead and wounded? He looked about and, finding none, grew thoughtful.

Then he departed from the dance-hall and hurried back up the hill. Nor was he greatly astonished when he saw the little rock jail in which Ed Norwood had been incarcerated since that March day of the killing. What did beget his wonderment was the size of the hole which the cowmen

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of the Canadian had made in the stone wall during the limited time which was at their disposal.

"Ed sure didn't have to bend his head when he came out," he confided to his deputy; "you could drive a cow through it."

To say he was unappreciative of the fine feeling which had brought his constituents to the trouble of staging the battle, in order that he might not be embarrassed by being present at the jail, would be to do him an injustice. But he knew his duty and he lived up to it by going forth after the fugitive. He stuck to the trail until it vanished somewhere over on the Pecos. And that his good friends had expected this was afterward proved when it became known that they had mounted Ed Norwood on the fastest horse that could be procured on this side of the Panhandle.

All of this happened in the Spring of 1883, when another event was taking place, an affair which had its influence on the whole Panhandle—and for that matter on ranges thousands of miles away—before it was over.

It originated in the changed conditions which have already been mentioned. Many of the big outfits were in the hands of absent owners, to whom the cow business appealed only as a dividend producer. These sent their own managers out West to handle affairs; with the result that the Panhandle's old-timers witnessed the advent of numerous ambitious young men, none of whom—as the saying goes—would know his own photograph if he saw it on a cow.

There were graduates from Eastern colleges, big-game hunters, tea-planters from Ceylon and that breed of English younger sons who became known throughout the West as remittance men. Most of them were good drinkers and some of them were good riders, once they got the hang of the stock saddles with their long stirrups. But here their fitness ended.

Poor management means small dividends, a condition which was further aggravated by the inevitable constriction of the range. Small dividends as usual brought wage reductions. The disposition of the cowboy to look askance at a tenderfoot was heightened when these tenderfeet slashed the payrolls. The old loyalty to the owner was fast vanishing.

Over near the head of the Red River the J. A. outfit had fallen into the hands of the Adairs, who were Irish gentry. One day when the news went round that Mr. and Mrs. Adair were coming out to visit the ranch, the punchers held a big medicine talk among themselves and determined to make their fortunes by kidnaping the pair.

The names of the bold spirits who conceived the plan have not come down; but it was perfected to the point where the conspirators built a dug-out in a secluded spot, stocked it up with the best food they could procure and hung the earthern walls with the finest Indian blankets. All that was lacking were the victims themselves; but before their arrival Charles Goodnight heard rumors of what was going on, and when they appeared a troop of cavalry accompanied them. Which put an end to some high hopes.

But the spirit that prompted this bizarre plan continued to grow stronger until, in the Spring of 1883, it culminated in the cowboys' strike.

For months before this most unique of American labor demonstrations, the saloons of Tascosa had noticed a falling-off of business. There were some two hundred of the recalcitrants, and every man of them was saving his wages. When the big day came they drew their pay and departed to gather at a rendezvous on the Alamasitos, twenty-five miles or so southwest of the county seat.

They had stocked up with provisions and a goodly supply of whisky; they sent their ultimatum to the owners—it amounted to some twenty dollars a month more than the existing wage scale—and they "holed up" to await results. Round-up season was near at hand; it looked as if they must have their way in the end; they killed their own beef, ate and drank their fill, shot at marks and did their best to find out who among them was the biggest liar; all of which helped the days to pass very nicely.

But there was one thing with which they had not reckoned; it was the wages which were weighing down their pockets. Even the hazards of draw poker failed to relieve the restlessness which the presence of that money brought upon them. And finally, when they were able to stand it no longer, they rode in a body to Tascosa.

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SHERIFF JIM EAST already had his hands full, for court was in session at the time, and the presence of two hundred cowboys, every one of whom was bringing with him a large portion of his year's savings and a good-sized grievance, promised to make life in the county seat not only deeply interesting but to an extent uncertain.

He thought the matter over and decided to resort to diplomacy. So he sought out Tom Harris, who was the head of the movement, and had a talk with that industrial reformer together with the latter's aides.

"That's what I'm up against, boys," he said when he had recapitulated the existing complications, "and if there's any trouble now it means we've got to call the Rangers. We never needed 'em yet in Tascosa, and I'd sure hate to have you fellows put that disgrace on the town."

They agreed with his sentiments and promised to keep order among themselves.

That day the sheriff posted a sign at the top of the grade to remind the more tumultuous spirits of the edict which restricted promiscuous shooting to the limits of the lower town. On the next morning when he was on his way to the court-house he found his notice riddled beyond perusal with big-caliber bullets. Some men would have looked upon the desecration as a challenge; but having himself known days when—like the cowboy of the famous "Lament"—he was wont to go prancing in the saddle, he understood the spirit which had prompted the marksmen. So he said nothing and, as he had forseen, having saved face they remained content.

Hogtown, of course, passed through a hectic Springtime, but the prosperity which accompanied the visitation did much to mitigate any hard feelings on the part of the various dance-hall proprietors. Almost invariably disputes were settled by the assessment of damages and all hands lining up before the bar.

Meantime the strike was making poor progress, and the resources of the strikers were fast dwindling. One day the leaders determined on a coup, and a company of fifty odd protestants marched *en masse* to call upon old Jot Gunther, who was one of the foremost of the cowmen in opposing their demands.

His ranch-house was a few miles out of town; but when they drew near it was evident that the news had gone before them, for the cowman stood on the front steps with his single-shot Sharps buffalo gun. Just to let them know his sentiments on the subject of arbitration he sent two or three fifty-caliber slugs along their forefront.

"That ol' rifle boomed like a cannon," one of the strikers told the audience who had gathered about him in Tascosa an hour or two later, "and every bullet done kicked up a bucketful of dust. We just made up our minds to leave Jot Gunther be as long as he was feeling that-a-way about it."

And that was about all there was to the cowboy's strike.

But the following Summer witnessed the departure of many who had been top hands, and for several years the emigration continued until the soft Texas drawl became so common on Montana and Wyoming ranges that it no longer attracted notice.

AND now rustling of a new sort began throughout the Panhandle. In the old days cow thieves had been for the most part of two varieties —arrogant owners who had clapped their iron on every animal that came their way, and bold marauders who drove off whole bunches at a time. In place of these came a stealthier craft, who altered brands or recruited their herds by sleepering.

The processes of brand mutilation are various and intricate, but all of them amount merely to changing the original mark. Sleepering is different. There always were "sleepers" on every range; calves which the owner's cowboys had found unbranded—usually because the mothers had managed to hide during the round-up—and which they simply earmarked. Some time later on they would brand them.

The thief who resorted to this method was sometimes an employe of the men whom he was robbing and sometimes a neighbor. Finding an unbranded calf running with its mother he gave it the proper earmark and let it go. Later, when the little fellow was weaned, he put his own iron on it.

It was hard to catch the thieves; there were many of them; and there were increasing numbers of settlers who sympathized with them because of the inevitable hostility between the nester and the cowman. The owners clubbed together at length and employed a detective agency whose name was famous, and the agency

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sent out an operative. But the man had not been in Tascosa a week before every rustler in the place knew what he was seeking. And one night a number of them took his revolver from him, poured a libation of beer into its barrel, and ducked him in the nearest watering-trough. After which he departed for the East and was heard of no more along the Canadian.

Then came the two-gun men.

Barroom gladiators, the old-timers called them in derision. For they were of a vastly different breed from the warriors of the Canadian who had guarded their employers' herds against Indians, outlaws and overreaching neighbors in the early days. These newcomers did no work on the range or in the branding-pens, but rode the fattest horses and, when the fancy seized them, went to town to spend higher wages than the top hands drew. Their business was to exterminate the rustlers and to guard the persons of the managers.

Being hired to slay, they had to make good, of course, and it is a matter of record on every range where these fellows worked that the vast majority of their killings were done in cold blood; the most of their victims were hapless nesters. Invariably their presence, instead of clearing up an ugly situation, increased the complications until the culmination came in a pitched battle. This was the case in Oldham County.

Among the gladiators here were three whom the managers of the L. S. outfit had hired: Fred Chilton, Frank Valley and Ed King. Tascosa came to know them well, and before long the inevitable feud grew out of their visits to the county seat. Among the members of the other faction were Lem Woodruff, who had formerly been a puncher with the L. X. outfit, Louis Bozeman and Charley Emory, who had likewise worked for various cattlemen of the Canadian, and the Catfish Kid, a long-haired individual with a penchant for garments of fringed buckskin; he had gained unenviable notoriety by slaying an unarmed stranger who had refused to dance for him.

There was the usual interchanging of threats through third parties accompanied by the usual increase of tenseness in the atmosphere while the community waited to see whom it was going to bury and whom the officers were going to bring before the grand jury. And on the night of March 21, 1886, Sally Emory—the same Sally whose accomplice the cowboy Norwood had slain—goaded Ed King into going forth to kill Lem Woodruff.

That day King had ridden into town with Fred Chilton and Frank Valley, who were at this time playing billiards in Jim East's saloon. That Woodruff would be waiting for his coming never entered his mind; perhaps one less susceptible would have done a bit of reasoning and taken into consideration the fact that the bartender had been in high favor for a long time with the woman. It may have been vanity that blinded him to possibilities of any treachery. At any rate he went to Martin Dunn's saloon, where Woodruff worked, and took with him John Lang, a cowboy.

The saloon was closed—which was enough to make a man take thought, for the hour was early as hours were reckoned in Tascosa—but King and Lang went straight on—until Lem Woodruff and Charley Emory opened fire upon them from ambush.

The ambuscade was well chosen, a narrow space between the saloon and the adjoining building; and only the pistol flashes marked the location of the pair in the darkness. Ed King's body was torn by two big-caliber slugs before he was aware of the presence of his enemies. He was dying then, but by the time he fell he had managed to do some pretty accurate shooting on his own account. Emory staggered away badly wounded, and Woodruff dragged himself to a cabin in the rear of the saloon with a bullet through his groin.

John Lang meantime was running as fast as his legs would carry him to the Equity Bar. Here he proclaimed the news to Chilton and Valley, and the two billiard players dropped their cues to draw their revolvers. They raced to the spot where their companion's body lay and plunged into the narrow alley between the buildings. In the rear of the saloon they caught sight of Jesse Sheets, who had left his all-night eating-house to find out who was being killed. Valley's gun flamed; Sheets fell with a bullet in his forehead.

The pair did not wait to investigate but went on to the cabin where Woodruff had taken refuge.

Sheriff Jim East, who lived on the upper floor of the court-house, had been awakened by the shots and was already on his way to the scene with his double-barreled sawed-off shotgun. He arrived in time to see a

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portion of the eventsthat followed, and from the conflicting versions of those events his has been chosen for this narrative.

About the cabin where the wounded Woodruff crouched, a three-cornered battle was raging. For, when Valley and Chilton had fired five shots through the door, the enfolding night was cut by rifle flashes. The identity of the men who did that shooting was never legally established; but they lay among the sand-hills which surrounded the litter of cabins and outbuildings. Chilton fell, and as he was dragging himself to an old well-curb a second bullet killed him. Valley pitched forward, shot between the eyes. And Jim East came on a run in time to see the last rifle flash.

As he drew nearer to the cabin the sheriff caught sight of two horses tethered on the summit of one of the sand-hills. He would perhaps have paid more attention to the animals at the time had he not seen the Catfish Kid slinking away into the darkness, rifle in hand.

"Drop that gun," Jim East shouted and brought his own weapon to his shoulder.

The Catfish Kid was raising the rifle when the shotgun bellowed. But at the moment when the sheriff was pulling the trigger some enthusiast who had followed him to the fray, fired a Winchester so close to his ear that he staggered back half stunned. So the buckshot missed their target. But the Catfish Kid had enough. When the smoke cleared away he was standing with both hands reaching heavenward. Thus he was taken into custody and later Woodruff, Emory and Bozeman were arrested.

Now, as has been said, the so-called gladiators were never popular among the cowboys of the Panhandle, but the element whom the other faction represented was liked perhaps even less. And when the funeral of the four victims was held the next day Tascosa was crowded by men who were a trifle more than willing to fight at the lowering of an eyelash.

The saloons closed during the brief ceremonial. Practically all of the town turned out at the burial of the three L. S. men in Tascosa's boot hill. And every male in the throng was heavily armed. But Sheriff Jim East and his deputy, Pierce, were very much in evidence, and the day went off without further bloodshed. The unfortunate Jesse Sheets was given sepulture in the Casamero Romero pasture.

The days went by, and the feeling continued to run high. It was intensified when one of the absent owners of the L. S. came down from Kansas City at round-up time and brought two dozen fighting cowboys to town with him. He sought out the sheriff one evening for a medicine talk.

"Look here," he said, "you're tired out with all this work and chasing up witnesses. You've got those fellows in jail now. Why don't you take Mrs. East out to the ranch and have a good rest? Stay a week or two."

Jim East smiled as he shook his head.

"I aim to stick around here," he answered. "You see, if these prisoners are going to be hung, it's going to be because Judge Willis says so. There won't be any lynching."

The cowman argued, but the sheriff remained quietly obdurate.

"I took my oath to enforce the law in my way—not in yours," was his final ultimatum.

He backed it up with vigilance. There was no further talk of mob law.

So ended the big shooting scrape in Tascosa. The prisoners, it may be added, were subsequently acquitted.

In the days to come President Lee, of the Lee Scott Company, owners of the L. S. outfit, induced Jim East to take the job of general manager instead of running a third time.

"I'll take it on condition I can handle things my own way," were the sheriff's terms. And when he went to the ranch his first move was to dispense with the hired gunmen. Which in itself did away with a good deal of the trouble so far as that company was concerned.

During the next year the railroad came to Tascosa. It was an event for which men had been waiting with eagerness; high hopes had been built on it. And yet, when it transpired, the town began to languish. It was as if Tascosa had stood all it could stand with the law's coming; as if this arrival of steel rails was too much for the town. Within a few months every one could see that it was dying.

Soon afterward they moved the county seat to Amarillo. A year or so later a cowman who visited the spot on the north bank of the Canadian where the traders used to rendezvous with the Comanches in the old days, looked over the crumbling adobe walls.

"Well," said he, "she done died with her boots on."

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THE OTHER ALLINGHAM

BY ROBERT SIMPSON

Author of "The Swan Song of Knife-Edge Harrison," "Gilford the Gifted," etc.

WHEN Captain Barraclough of the *Mayana* shot himself, Allingham took to the bush.

The *Mayana*, an ex-passenger steamer just taken off the mail service, was anchored in Segwanga Creek, opposite Perkins & Gray's trading-factory when it happened.

Barraclough apparently had chosen to die in his bunk between two and three A.M. by sticking the muzzle of his revolver between his teeth, and the consensus of opinion in West African shipping trade and government circles was that he had simply grown tired of the bother of living in a world that disliked him so much.

Comparatively speaking, he was a newcomer in the mangrove-bordered creeks of the Niger Delta. Hogmanay Sandy MacGregor, for instance, could distinctly remember when Barraclough had brought the old *Igabo* into Segwanga on his first trip to the coast something less than ten years before.

He could remember also, without any trouble, that Barraclough was the only Oil River's skipper of his acquaintance he had never invited to dinner. But Hogmanay was not a man to speak ill of the dead, and while others gossiped, he held his peace.

There was some veiled talk of trouble at home—a threat of demotion or dismissal or something about a family disgrace—no one seemed to be sure what it was exactly, and it did not rise above a whisper.

Daniel Dane Parker, the district commissioner, together with little Doctor Trail, held a formal inquest and conducted a thorough investigation of the facts, then gave the ship a clean bill and allowed it to depart in the command of Hugo Grelling, the chief officer.

Inside of the proverbial nine days, Segwanga had forgotten about it, and waited, in the ordinary course of events, for Allingham to come back.

Allingham always had come back. Segwanga assumed he always would. But this time it was different.

BETWEEN the cradle and the grave there is one good fight in every man. Allingham, apparently, was the exception that proved the rule.

He was a lean-faced, slightly stoop-shouldered man, who spoke in a low, mumbling voice and walked on tiptoe simply to prevent attracting attention to himself. His eyes never smiled, though his mouth laughed readily at other men's jokes, and those who had taken the trouble to study him at close range became aware of the circumstance that, somehow or other, there were two of him.

No one could explain this exactly, and yet there was nothing unusually mysterious about it.

His business in life was the Perkins & Gray trading-agency at Segwanga; his recreation the bush.

Sometimes, when he was attending to business, he would tiptoe up and down his

"The Other Allingham," copyright, 1922, by Robert Simpson.

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veranda like a restless bush-cat in a cage, or, what was worse, move soundlessly about the beach, appearing and disappearing in a manner that tested the heat-racked, quinin-ridden nerves of his assistants to the uttermost.

Then they knew that they would go in to dinner one evening and the Kroo chief steward would say to Kennett, the senior assistant—

"He done go, sah."

Once, Kennett was in the midst of a heavy and trying afternoon rush of trade in sweltering confinement of the shop when he suddenly discovered Allingham almost touching his elbow.

Kennett leaped to his feet, filled the air with dark blue indignation and, in one of the flaring bursts of rage that were numbered among the prerogatives of trading-beach shop clerks, cleared the shop of its sweating pack of native customers.

Then he looked around for Allingham. But there was no sign of him.

He came back five days later.

There was no explanation; there never was. He simply walked to the back of the beach, entered the path that led into the bush, and for several days or weeks his whereabouts was largely a matter of conjecture.

When he played *vingt et un* or poker with his fellow agents, or lost the money he won at cards, playing billiards at Marsden & Co.'s, he was not the liveliest company in the world. But he was congenial enough inasmuch as, having no opinions of his own to offer upon anything, he was in agreement with all men.

As Hogmanay Sandy MacGregor had once said to Galbraith of the A. P. A. (African Produce Association, Limited), one lazy Saturday afternoon while they drank long drinks on Hogmanay's veranda:

"There's something that's no' canny on Allingham's mind. It's not liquor and I'm sure it's not the native villages, so I'm thinkin' the man has a kind o' bee buzzin' inside o' him that'll not let him sit still very long."

Galbraith nodded and drank.

"One of these days he'll take a longer walk then he intended and Kennett, poor chap, will have to write a letter to the widow. An awful job that!"

"Is he married?" Hogmanay asked in some surprize. "Surely not. I never heard that he had a wife."

"Hasn't he? I thought he had. Maybe I'm wrong. I can't remember who put the notion into my head."

It was certain that Allingham had not said anything about the existence or nonexistence of a wife. Allingham never waxed sentimental or confidential no matter how hot or humid the night might be. His personal affairs were labeled "strictly private;" or rather, they were not labeled at all. It was as if he had none to hide or reveal.

Somewhat esthetic, wholly inoffensive, with a faint suggestion of melancholy in his eyes, Allingham would have been almost a colorless nonentity, but for his penchant for the bush.

This alone gave him individuality. This was "the other Allingham."

There were no stories that came out of that mangrove maze to declare what manner of man this Allingham was. But after Captain Barraclough shot himself—about three weeks after—Daniel Dane Parker visited Perkins & Gray's beach one afternoon and had a private chat with Kennett, the senior assistant. The conversation took place in Allingham's rooms, and Kennett did not say what it was about.

The following day, Ortali the mummy, who wore the blue uniform of the native police, whose shrunken little body was like a withered leaf, but whose eyes were two twinkling fires in a pit-black dark, stopped squatting outside the consulate treasury office at Segwanga and made his way slowly along the dusty road that led toward Akerri and beyond.

THE upper half of Allingham was clothed in a singlet or undershirt, the lower in a piece of trade cloth known as "real India." The cloth was fastened about his waist in a twist knot, native fashion, and hung loosely to his ankles.

There were Hausa sandals on his otherwise naked feet and with a mushroom-shaped sun helmet stuck carelessly on the back of his head, he squatted outside a hut in the village of Ekatani smoking hogshead tobacco in a blackened clay pipe.

Ekatani was on the edge of Sobo country. There had been a time when Allingham, in a flight of sardonic fancy, had been pleased

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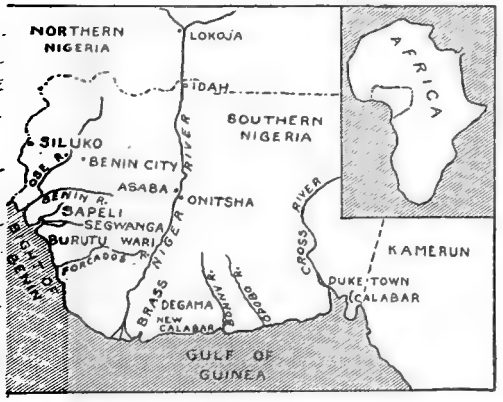
o call the place *"Inoni ola,"* which, approximately, means "the abode of dreams." Now the word that occurred to him most often was *ukuku,* which is darkness, or the still more simple *uku,* which is death.

He smoked without stirring for many minutes, in spite of the circling nearness of a threatening mangrove fly, and the village of Ekatani went on with the rather dirty and lazy business of living, as if Allingham were no more unusual than a fixed part of the landscape.



NIGER DELTA AND ADJOINING TERRITORY FACING ON THE BIGHT OF BENIN—THE COUNTRY KNOWN AS THE WHITE MAN'S GRAVEYARD

Its chief, whose name was Itelini, was a friend of Allingham's of several years standing. He was a little man, half Jakri, half Sobo, and of small consequence among the great in either tribe. His village also was small; a mere handful of mud-and-wattle-huts huddling squalidly together on the edge of a dark little by-creek, and screened from the unsuspecting traveler by a thin curtain of bush.

The place had served Allingham's purpose admirably. He paid well and Chief Itelini was faithful to the interests of his guest. He saw to it, too, that his people also were faithful.

But that did not prevent Ortali the mummy from finding out what he wanted to know. The number of Ortali's years were as much beyond conjecture as were the number of his great grandchildren, most of whom were thinking of the sons who would perpetuate the greatness of their sires.

Therefore, Ortali, having a vested ancestral interest in the ears and eyes of many, listened attentively to the subsequent whisperings of their tongues.

With the result that, as Allingham squatted outside his hut and smoked and contemplated the meaning of futility, Ortali scuffed his slow way into the village of Ekatani, altogether unmindful of the chattering consternation he scattered to right and left at every step he took.

He was wholly unattended, and his business being with Allingham, he did not pause until he stood before him.

"Mas' Parker say be besser if you come back."

"Parker—eh?"

Allingham had risen to his feet. There were curious faces all about him—wide-eyed faces that whispered— but he scarcely paid any attention to those. He looked down into the wizened little face of Ortali that, but for the eyes, so much resembled a dead piece of mango-bark, and he tried to realize just what he signified.

"What does Parker want?"

"I no savvy. He say, suppose I look you, I tell you come back."

"Wha's matter?" Chief Itelini asked nervously from the sidelines. "Gov'ment man want look you?"

Allingham murmured something that sounded like "shut up!" and his hand, absently going in search of a handkerchief to mop a cold sweat from his forehead, discovered that he was not wearing trousers. In the presence of Ortali, this startled him, although, a minute or two before, he had not thought anything of it.

"Tell Parker—" he began upon an impulse, then paused and thought it over.

But the smolder in his eyes did not die down. It leaped into sudden flame and he said at last quite definitely—

"Tell Parker to go to ——."

Ortali's sunken lips bulged just a little.

"Mas' Parker be angry suppose I talk so," he offered mildly. "I think so be besser you come back."

"No! Go away! Get out!"

Ortali remained where he was, his little eyes twinkling mightily.

"You come back, li'l bit?" he asked patiently.

"Go to the ——! Edge! Tell Parker it's none of his confounded business. I'm done with it. Done with the whole thing! Finished. Palaver set. I don't need any help from Parker or anybody else. Get out!"

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Neither Ortali nor the whispering audience round about understood what Allingham said—nothing more than a word here and there—but none of them had ever seen him so excited before. And it was obvious, even to the pot-bellied children who had not yet reached the dignity of a loin-cloth, that Allingham was not going to accompany Ortali back to Segwanga.

"Maybe so, we hab li'l bit drink," Chief Itelini proposed, mildly endeavoring to close the breach, and hoping at the same time that Allingham would provide his white man's gin or whisky for the occasion. "Li'l bit drink be good for old man belly. No be so?"

Allingham scowled and his lean, colorless face seemed to acquire a suggestion of dignity and character when he did it.

"All right. Give him li'l bit drink and li'l bit chop. Then he go 'way. *Savez?* He go 'way!"

Itelini nodded vigorously, and Allingham dived nervously into his hut to supply the gin. He thrust the bottle at the chief through the window hole, then retired into the shadow again, apparently determined to have nothing more to say to Daniel Dane Parker's emissary.

Ortali accepted the drink and also a helping of ground-nut soup, which, because it had been cooked for Allingham's special benefit and at his expense, was particularly rich in the best of yams, hard-boiled eggs and chicken. After a while Ortali asked of Itelini in Jakri—

"The white man has come to Itelini's house many times?"

The chief of Ekatani made no answer. He fixed a stony stare upon Allingham's hut and ignored the mildly questioning light in Ortali's eyes.

"When a white man lives like a Jakri man," Ortali went on simply, "he is dead among his own people."

This was none of Itelini's business, and he made no comment on the subject.

"When a white man is dead among his own people, there is a curse upon him, just as there is a curse upon the Jakri man who seeks refuge in the country of the Ijo or among the men of Brass."

Itelini did not choose to admit the parallel, and Ortali paused for a minute or so watching the quite unconscious entertainment provided by a bush puppy, a tortoise and a blissfully nude three-year-old child who wielded a broken paddle without any discrimination whatever.

"If the white man dies, how will Itelini talk to the big commissioner?"

"*Cha!*"

"It is not good for the Jakri to have a white man die in his house when there is no other white man to say how he died," Ortali persisted quietly. "The dead leaf falls from the tree, and no man looks to see where the wind carries it; the Jakri man dies upon the white man's beach, and his sons come and take his body away and the thing is forgotten before the sun goes down. But when the white man dies in the black man's house—that is like broken glass under the feet or the edge of a sharp knife at the throat."

Itelini shifted his position on his mat restlessly. The thought of Allingham dying had not occurred to him. Every so often the white trader came to Ekatani, stayed a few days—sometimes a week or two—then went away again. This time he had stayed longer than usual, but the penurious little chief had thought the circumstance more profitable than remarkable.

"Until the big commissioner comes," Ortali said and rose slowly, "Itelini will not sleep. He will watch. Mas' Allingham must not die."

"*E-yaw! Yella! Yella!*"

The chief was openly frightened now. As he leaped to his feet, he realized that a grave and awkward responsibility had been suddenly thrust upon him.

He knew perfectly well that Ortali's repeated talk of death was not idle. Suicide was common among the Delta peoples, and Itelini, in his lifetime, had had several demonstrations of the fact that, once a man had made up his mind that he was possessed of devils and that his time had come to die, that man almost always did die, either very suddenly or simply by wasting slowly but surely away.

Doubtless it was the same with the white man.

"Itelini is poor," the chief whined. "He has nothing."

"He has eyes," Ortali declared sententiously. "And his sons are men. Watch."

A few minutes later Ortali passed out of the village of Ekatani, and Itelini went timidly to the door of Allingham's hut, accompanied by the most stalwart of his sons who was guilty of no more clothing than a loin cloth.

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"Mas' Allingham!"

There was no answer. Itelini called the me again and then began to snivel and feel very sick.

His son entered the first room and found attered traces of Allingham's belongings—piece of "real India" cloth and a pair of ausa sandals. In the second room there as no sign of Allingham at all.

But there was a window hole in the third id end room, facing the creek, and there ere marks of heavy boot heels on the dry ud sill.

HARDLY more than two miles from the village, Allingham, in the habiliments of a white man, stepped om behind the trunk of a giant cotton-ee into the narrow bush path and almost od on Ortali's naked toes.

"Hello, bushman," he said with affable isrespect and his scowl had given way to a ind of recklessness that was altogether oreign to him. "Which place you go?"

Ortali stopped. His wizened little head, s if his scrawny neck had suddenly refused o support it, toppled over on one side, and e looked up at Allingham like an impertinent sparrow.

"I go Segwanga," he admitted, then raited for Allingham to explain.

Allingham grinned. And there was a neer in it that altered his customary expression of neutrality completely.

"You go tell commissioner which place live?"

"I tell him you go 'way from dere," Ortali returned with unblinking wisdom. 'Maybe so you go Segwanga; maybe so you o 'nother place. I no *savez*."

"You're a wise old owl. But I ought to wring your ruddy neck for mixing yourself ip in my affairs." Allingham had fight in is eyes; the righteous indignation of a man who resents being hunted. "What's matter, Parker tell you to go find me?"

"I no *savez*."

"Hunh!"

A native mammy, with a calabash on her ead and her baby on her hip, squeezed her way past with the customary "*Doh*" of greeting to Ortali, who gave no visible sign of ecognition. Allingham looked at her dully nd, quite obviously, was thinking of something else. "*Mayana* done go?" he asked abruptly.

"You mean Ba'clough ship?"

"You know what I mean!" Allingham almost shouted.

"*Mayana*. Ba'clough ship," Ortali droned. "Ship go 'way. Palaver set."

"Gone, eh?"

"*Mayana* go 'way, sah. Yessah."

Allingham appeared to be studying a black-and-gold lizard that sunned itself in the path a few yards away, while a huge, multi-colored butterfly fluttered lazily overhead. A grass-green snake of sizeable dimensions slithered suddenly out of the underbrush and, even more suddenly, slithered back again. Then Allingham gruffly said.

"All right. I go."

And, without any further comment on the matter, he brushed past Ortali in the direction of Segwanga. In a few minutes he had disappeared around a bend in the path, and shortly after nine o'clock that evening—at least two hours in advance of his slower moving Nemesis—he reached the Segwanga consulate.

Daniel Dane Parker was glad, and just a little surprized, to see him.

"Hello, Allingham, where have you been keeping yourself?"

The Great Dane closed the door of his room with unusual care.

"Sit down. Ortali tell you I wanted to see you?"

The soles of Allingham's feet burned because of the pace he had made. His color was that of light-gray chalk and his eyes protruded under the stress of a trembling excitement. But he remained standing, his stooped shoulders just a little straighter than usual.

"I just came in to tell you to go to —— and to mind your own business," he said, and felt his throat and mouth and lips go dry and fuzzy. "I told Ortali to do it, but I knew he wouldn't. So I came myself."

Parker nodded, poured three fingers of whisky into a glass and handed it to his visitor.

"Drink that, and you'll say it better, and, incidentally, give me as good an excuse as I can think of for having one myself. Where is our mummified friend, by the way?"

Allingham drank the whisky at a gulp.

"Left him on the road," he said as he poured himself a chaser from the water-cooler. "What'd you send him after me

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for? What business is it of yours where I go?"

The Great Dane looked at Allingham over the rim of his glass.

"Personally, I don't care a *bicuba* where you go. But your wife does and I thought you ought to know it."

"My what!"

"Your wife."

Allingham did not drop the glass. Neither did he give any sign of guilt or even uneasiness. He met Parker eye to eye and grinned—that same sneering grin that altered his inoffensive personality so decidedly.

"I haven't a wife," he answered easily.

Parker finished his drink.

"Then I must have got everything badly twisted," he said agreeably as he put the glass aside and relieved Allingham of the responsibility of his. "I thought you had. Your name's Allingham Barraclough, isn't it?"

Allingham stiffened like a ramrod, jerking his head back as if the Great Dane had hit him. A haunting look came into his eyes—something of fear and something of shame—and for a little while the shuffling, naked-footed passing to and fro of the consulate house servants in the outer halls was not unlike the rustling of a shroud.

In the darkness below Parker's window, some one of Ethiopian persuasion laughed a wide-mouthed, throathy laugh, and in the consulate annex farther up the beach, Manning of the Public Works Department was singing "The Bedouin's Love Song" in an impassioned baritone for the benefit of the assistant district commissioner—a bespectacled and unemotional Scot out of an Edinburgh law school—and the R. N. R. captain of the Transport Department who was as romantic as a cuttle-fish.

Vaguely, Allingham, who knew the song, found himself thinking of the last line of the chorus.

"Till the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold."

He looked oddly at Parker for a moment or two; a dull look that might have presaged anything.

"My name's Allingham," he said in a colorless monotone. "Allingham."

"I know that. You dropped the Barraclough when——"

"—— you!"

"When you thought you ought to," Parker finished smoothly and, gripping Allingham's arms, encouraged him to sit down. "Don't get rattled. You're too sensitive. Too thin-skinned. Give yourself a chance. You'll hang, you know, if you're not careful."

"Hang?" Allingham grinned, and his look would have been funny if it had not been so utterly devoid of a mirthful intention.

"Exactly. Barraclough's suicide has begun to look like something uglier and cooler and more devilishly premeditated and——"

"Suicide? Barraclough?" Allingham looked up in quizzical amaze. "Is—is Barraclough dead? *Dead!*"

The Great Dane stepped away from Allingham's chair to escape the feverish clutching of his long lean hands, and to try to consider his visitor's surprize and excitement at better range.

Parker was too well versed in the ways of men, both white and black, to be readily taken in by an exhibition of spurious emotion, and he had sufficient reason to suspect that the Allingham Segwanga knew, was only a substitute for the real thing.

Consequently, he did not accept Allingham's convincing assumption of ignorance and amazement at its face value. In fact, it seemed as unreal as it was theatrical, and it encouraged him to solidify the conclusions he had come to, rather than throw them out bodily as he had hoped to be able to do.

"You should be reasonably certain of Barraclough's death," he said quietly.

"Why?"

"You killed him."

"I! I killed Barraclough!"

"Well, it's rather difficult to stick a revolver muzzle in a man's mouth and shoot and avoid killing him. Don't you think so?"

"I did that? To Barraclough?"

"I'm afraid you did." Then sharply. "Didn't you?"

Allingham drew an arm wearily and dazedly across his eyes. And, if he were acting, the performance was a masterpiece.

"I don't know. Perhaps I did. God knows I wanted to."

"I MUST have been drunk when I did it," Allingham said dully for at least the sixth time. "I never had nerve enough when I was sober."

There was no regret, no fear. If anything, his voice held a faint note of exultation.

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For several minutes he had slouched in the corner of the government launch *Vigilant's* cabin, on the way round to Provincial Headquarters at Warri, absently watching the hordes of flies and moths do their utmost to obscure the light of the little kerosene lamp, and there was neither fight nor flight in the lax indifference of his attitude.

"You must have been," the Great Dane said agreeably. "You wouldn't have come back if you hadn't forgotten all about it."

Allingham lifted his head a little.

"Was that why you sent the mummy after me instead of coming yourself? Just to see what I would do?"

"Something of that sort," Parker declared, and knew in his soul that he lied.

"I can't remember anything that happened that night," Allingham went on, as the launch sped through the narrow, pitch-black creeks. "Not until about four in the morning."

"Better not talk," Parker warned quietly. "You're under arrest, you know."

"Yes, I know. And for killing Barraclough, too! That's funny. But I want to talk. I've got to talk. If I killed Barraclough, I'm glad I did it. —— glad. The swine deserved it. You know he did!"

"All right," the Great Dane said placidly.

He had not thought the indignity of handcuffs necessary, but his regulation service revolver was in its usual place, and, though his sympathies were with his prisoner, he was not permitting himself to be unduly sentimental about it.

"I was sitting at my desk in my office," Allingham continued. "I had gone to sleep there evidently, and when I woke up I knew I wanted to go into the bush again, and this time I felt as if I'd have to stay there. So I just went." A pause. "I imagine I must have known he was dead then."

"What time did you say that was?"

"About four in the morning. I don't know how long I had been asleep, but I felt stiff and cramped and I wanted to walk and walk—away from things. Somehow, I had stopped fighting and was glad I'd stopped."

Allingham looked at Parker steadily a moment or two, then talked to his boots.

"At first, I would go off into the bush and get a deuce of a lot of satisfaction out of dropping down to Gehenna or Gethsemane or— I suppose hell is the simplest word; but that kind of thing was beginning to lose its savor. And this time, there wasn't any fun in it at all. It was just plain, every-day death—drab and cold and rather wormy. But even that didn't matter. I didn't care."

The Great Dane nodded and, for some reason or other, felt cheap. There was no satisfaction in turning a man like Allingham over to the higher authorities of the law at Warri.

"I'm telling you this," Allingham went on, "because you seem to have collected a lot of information on the reason for it all. Been through Barraclough's belongings, I suppose? And mine?"

"Barraclough's first," Parker admitted suggestively and offered his prisoner a cigaret.

"And they led you to—hunh! What a rotten job you've got, old man. Having to pick and scrape among filth and dead man's bones!"

He accepted the cigaret, and a light with a mechanical nod of thanks.

"What did you think of Barraclough when you'd finished? He was a hound, wasn't he?"

"Prefer to keep my opinions to myself," Parker said without any resentment.

"Yes—yes, of course," Allingham agreed nervously. "Foolish of me to ask. But—er—perhaps you can tell me if he had any photographs of them later than about seven years ago? We—that is—he and I never spoke about that, you know."

"I imagine some of the photographs must have been later than that," Parker had no hesitation in informing him.

"Yes?" in pitiful eagerness. "Might I——"

"I'm sorry. But I haven't brought them with me."

"Oh." A leaden pause followed. It was broken when Allingham laughed. "And I had to get drunk to do it! Where did you say I shot him and how?"

The Great Dane regarded his prisoner doubtfully.

"An absolute blank, eh?"

"Absolutely."

Allingham sat down again and waited patiently for Parker to elucidate. Then he asked anxiously:

"You don't think there is any mistake about this? You're pretty sure I did it, aren't you?"

Parker continued to study Allingham as if he were trying to find the mask and remove it. Then he asked casually—

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"Ever see Barraclough when he was asleep?"

"Yes. He snored frightfully and slept with his mouth wide open. Why?"

Parker's lips formed a thin, hard line and he tapped his knee with his clenched fist nervously.

"All right. For heaven's sake, shut up!"

Allingham stared, then asked insistently—

"I did it, didn't I?"

Parker snorted.

"The courts at home will have to decide that?" he answered shortly.

"At home! You are going to send me home!"

"Of course. We can't try a white man on a charge like that out here."

"And they'll drag the whole thing out into the open for everybody to look at, and—no! No!"

"Sit down!"

But Allingham came right on and a bullet, that purposely flew wide, had no more effect on him than the buzzing of a fly.

The great Dane's second shot also missed. Most inadvertently, too, it smashed the swinging cabin lamp and plunged the place instantly into darkness.

Considering how the lamp swayed just then, Parker had reason to feel that it was really good shooting.

"——!"

The expletive was Parker's and he thought it sounded convincing enough. A moment later, he was brushed aside as if he were of no more consequence than a velvet portière, and Allingham leaped for the deck and the rail at a single bound.

The Great Dane followed leisurely, wiping a chilly sweat from his forehead with a hand that shook just a little.

In a hoarse, thick voice, he ordered the engineer to stop the launch, and then, since there was no visible sign of Allingham, he cruised up and down the darksome little creek until he had assured his conscience that he was on the track of a forlorn hope.

"If the ruddy fool has drowned himself," he growled to no one in particular, "I'm done with him." Then, to the colored engineer. "All right, Jude. Turn her nose around. We'll sleep in Segwanga tonight."

ALLINGHAM knew the bush. Several weeks elapsed before the Great Dane succeeded in discovering even a trace of him.

The hint that Allingham still lived did not come from Ortali the mummy, or from any one connected with the consulate. Perkins & Gray's watch-boy was responsible for it.

Apparently, Allingham had sneaked back to his own beach one night when he was sure that all of his assistants were in bed and, next morning, it was discovered that his main object had been to provide himself with firearms and ammunition and a medicine kit. Then he disappeared again.

Sometimes, in the weeks that followed, there were whisperings of him being seen in the vicinity of Benin River; then he evidently shifted sharply to Siluko. But when, almost in the same breath, he was seen at Onitsha, Parker decided to give but little heed to rumor.

Ortali the mummy squatted outside the treasury office and baked his lean bones in the sun. He thought of Allingham not at all. It was Ortali's business to do as he was told, and the blue uniform of the native police clothed his inconsequent body because he always did all things so thoroughly.

On several occasions, the Great Dane stopped to speak to him, and Ortali's glittering little black eyes saw the queer suggestion of diffidence that had come into Parker's face; as if he were walking on eggs or balancing himself on the slender tail of a one-woman canoe.

Obviously, he was not happy, and when he called on Hogmanay Sandy MacGregor one afternoon to pay his monthly mess bill, the trader ordered drinks and watched his visitor from under lowered eyebrows.

"What's the matter wi' ye?" he asked finally. "Ye look as if you were tryin' to make up your mind and couldn't."

Parker laughed doubtfully.

"Sentiment's a degrading thing, isn't it?"

"Aye. It is that. Are ye thinkin' o' gettin' married?"

"Good Lord, no!" Parker exclaimed devoutly.

"Then what has a hardened auld sinner like you got to be sentimental about?"

"I'm a sort of godfather, *pro tem*, to a pretty eight-year-old female child in a party dress. And it's more, Mac, much more than I can bear. Chin chin."

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He finished his drink and rose and walked toward the stairs.

"Send me a bottle of bitters, will you? And some B. & W. quinin? And don't forget that when our mess orders peas, it wants the little ones. S'long."

"Ye should say farewell," Hogmanay suggested. "It's more sentimental and dramatic."

"Oh, —— the drama!" Parker grunted disagreeably and departed.

But his step lagged as he neared the consulate and he avoided Ortali the mummy with consummate care.

Then, one night a mail launch came screeching up from Forcados. The Sierra Leonese postmaster delivered a bundle of mail to Parker, who, when he came to a certain terse communication, sent at once for Ortali and said—

"You *savez* Allingham?"

"I *savez*."

"Go find him."

"I find him, sah."

Day by day after that Ortali reported cryptically.

"I find him sah, but I no look him."

Being interpreted, this meant that Ortali had tried to find Allingham, but had not succeeded in discovering his whereabouts. At the end of a week Parker demanded testily:

"What's matter? Your eye no good? Your ear done die?"

"Eye be all ri'. Ear be all ri'. Mas' Allingham live for bush long time. He *savez* bush too much."

"Rubbish! You've lived in the bush a thousand years. Go find him!"

SOME months later, down in the Ijo county, where filed teeth were more prevalent than loin-cloths and *juju* plays had a tendency to smell unlawfully of blood, there arose whisperings of a white witch-doctor who passed from village to village driving out devils and making the sick laugh again. The white witch-doctor never laughed himself.

It was said that when he had driven out devils to the number of many times ten, he would go back to his own people; but it was said also that his own people had cast him out and that he would never go back. Plainly there was a doubt about this.

Allingham himself, however, was in no doubt about it. Not because he had killed Barraclough and would hang for it. The Law was the Law and he respected its point of view. What he objected to was the noise it made when it succeeded in getting hold of some one to kill. It cackled like a hen that had just laid an egg.

Now, if the thing could have been done quietly, in some out-of-the-way corner—But it was useless to expect anything of the sort; and Allingham was not going back to the noise—not if he could help it.

Suicide never once occurred to him. In fact, he rather enjoyed living, if only because he could think that, at last, he actually had killed Barraclough.

He did not settle down anywhere. It was better to keep moving, particularly in Ijo country. The natives were wild, intractable and impetuous as any three-year-old child. There were villages that had never seen a white man; others where the white man was a being who sat in a queer shaped canoe that puffed smoke out of a pipe and moved without paddles; and still others where Allingham's hosts knew so much about the white man and his guns that it was not wise to accept of their hospitality overnight.

Allingham needed his revolvers; not for defense so much as defiance. If the Law insisted upon coming after him, he was going to compel it to shoot him, quietly and without any fuss, where no one that mattered would hear. One of the revolvers he slung under his arm-pit, inside his shirt; the other he carried openly in his belt. Otherwise, his medicine-kit was his only baggage.

And so he went his ragged and sun-scorched way, curing the sick where he could, eating and sleeping like a native, and sometimes, after their somnolent but wildly imaginative fashion, thinking like them, too.

Through filth and stench and squalor, along trifling bush paths no wider than the flat of a native foot, he went deeper and deeper into the mangrove-haunted maze where the gods of men crawled on their shiny bellies, filled the night with howls or lazily opened cavernous jaws to yawn over the daily sacrifice.

It was in the village of Oyeka that Parker finally found him.

Accompanied by Ortali the mummy, and a handful of lesser police, the Great Dane arrived just before nightfall in a government launch, and he was hoping that the

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fugitive was not going to be a fool and stir up trouble.

Allingham, however, saw Parker first and straightway made ready to die after his own fashion. He barricaded himself as best he could in a small round hut that stood at the fork of two paths at one end of the village; dispossessed the inhabitants of the hut, including a sacred and sleepy old python that had but recently devoured one of the family pigs. Then Allingham sent an emissary to Parker and invited him to start shooting.

Whereupon Parker used language the emissary did not understand, and sent Ortali up to Allingham's hut with instructions. Allingham allowed Ortali to approach just so far and no farther, while the wild and scrawny Ijo villagers looked on in chattering amaze. This was just a minute or two before sundown.

"Parker says shoot palaver no good," Ortali informed Allingham unemotionally. "He say, suppose you come look picture, no man shoot."

"Picture!" Allingham said the word softly to himself as he studied the mummy through the window hole of the hut. Then so Ortali could hear:

"I no *savez* picture. Tell Parker bring um."

Ortali obeyed, and he had scarcely disappeared around a corner, en route to the creek side and Parker's launch, when darkness came down and smothered the village of Oyeka as with a heavy black cloth.

Allingham waited a little while. Then, because he felt that, in the dark, he would be safer out of the hut than in it, he slipped outside and drifted rapidly off into the bush. He had not gone very far, however, before he stopped short, turned slowly about and faced the village again.

For some little time he just stood there staring straight ahead. Perhaps he did see the few hurricane lanterns that, in the distance and through the scrub, looked like rather large sized fire-flies flickering here and there in Oyeka. But he gave little thought to these.

The thing he was trying hard to remember was that he must not be taken alive, and Parker's insidious reference to pictures would not let him do this. In fact, he was compelled to reconsider his opinion of Parker in those few minutes. Previously, he had not believed that the Great Dane would descend to so low a trick as to bait his man with a soft-edged inducement of that sort.

Allingham knew now what Parker had meant by pictures; and in the succeeding hour, while the distant hurricane lanterns bobbed jerkily round about the hut he had occupied, Allingham came to a decision that—in a man of his supposed pusillanimity—was more than merely startling. It was cataclysmic.

THE Great Dane's policemen slept on the launch's deck, the commissioner himself in the little cabin amidships. One of the blue-uniformed, bare-legged minions of the law played the part of night watchman by parading up and down the deck until there was no one awake to appreciate his importance; then he sat down on a kerosene case and rolled and swayed in fitful sleep until something or some one woke him up.

Allingham did not wake him up. He cracked him gently behind the ear with the butt of one of his revolvers, rolled him off the kerosene case, stepped over him and passed on as soundlessly as any cat.

There was something uncanny about Allingham then. Ragged and unkempt, his feet guiltless of shoes, a service revolver in either hand, he moved with a curious, crouching, sidewise motion, his head sunk deeply between his hunched shoulders.

He had come there like a shadow, and there had been scarcely a sign of him before he appeared behind the sleeping policeman's back. Only the fact that his clothes were dry, told of the direction of his approach to the launch which was moored alongside Oyeka's wabbly mangrove-stick breakwater.

He dipped down into the launch's cabin, and apparently his eyes had no need of time to become accustomed to the deeper dark. With scarcely a moment's pause, he went directly to the head of Parker's mosquito-curtained camp-bed, and presently, the Great Dane was conscious of something that pressed hard into his ribs, and of a voice that growled uncompromisingly.

"Come out of that!"

Parker came out as quickly and obediently as the mosquito curtain would let him. He sat on the edge of the camp-bed and looked up at the vague shadow that stood over him.

"Put your hands above your head. Up!"

Again the Great Dane did exactly as the

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voice and the guns that supported it told him to.

"Hello, Allingham. Still exercising your penchant for dramatics? You should never have been a trader. Your strong suit——"

"Shut up! Where are those pictures? Get them!"

"Pictures?"

"Photographs. You said there were photographs. Give them to me!"

Parker rose slowly. He could see Allingham better now, and the wildness in the man's usually dull and placid eyes warned him to take no unnecessary chances.

"All right. I'll get them for you. Shall I light the lamp so that you can see them better?"

"No, never mind that. I'm going to take them with me."

"Was that all you came for?"

"Get them, confound you!"

Parker shrugged his shoulders and marveled at the strangely variant loves of men. When he descended to his knees before a uniform case, Allingham stood over him, his nerves as ragged as his shirt.

"No tricks!" he rasped warningly. "I don't care a rap whether I shoot you or not."

"I can sense that," Parker said resignedly, as he fitted a key into the lock of the uniform case. "But why you should take it all out on me, when you didn't have gumption enough to kill Barraclough, even when you were drunk, doesn't seem quite square."

"What's that?" Allingham stepped sharply away a yard or two, his screeching nerves making him suspicious of trickery in Parker's every move and word. "What do you mean?"

"If you'll let me light the lamp——"

"No!"

"Don't be so jumpy, man." A pause. "Doane, the chief steward of the *Mayana*, did it. He drank too much cold beer down at Bakana and contracted blackwater and it scared the story out of him. I'll show you first officer Grelling's telegram and a long-winded letter from the chief engineer if you'll let me light the lamp."

"It's a lie!"

"You'll rouse the whole police force if you yell like that," Parker suggested pacifically.

"But I—when I woke up at my desk that morning I knew it was all over!"

"I don't doubt it. As a matter of fact, you did go off to the *Mayana* that night. That's what made it so black against you. And proving that you were very drunk, you went off in a canoe."

"I—I don't remember that," Allingham said in a weak voice, and his revolvers drooped despondently.

"No, of course, not. Neither do you remember that the chief steward put you gently back into the canoe and sent you home again. He was jealous of his privileges, was Doane."

"Jealous!"

"Something like that, I imagine. In any case, he thought you'd make a mess of the trick. So he did it himself."

Allingham gasped and Parker added calmly—

"You see, he also knew that Barraclough slept with his mouth wide open."

Allingham's knees sagged and one of them poked through a jagged rip in the trouser leg. He was more than merely weak and tired.

"But why—why should he——"

The Great Dane flung up the lid of the uniform case with a gesture of disgust.

"Oh, the usual thing. Something about money and a woman. They seem to have been Barraclough's specialties."

Allingham's legs bent under him like the blades of a knife.

"I—I'd like to see those pictures—if you don't mind," he whispered and sprawled upon his face.

THE pictures were those of a woman who was several years younger than Allingham, and of a little girl in a party frock. The face of the woman was pretty, but there was no strength in it. It was too pliable; and there were letters among Barraclough's belongings to prove it. Parker saw to it that Allingham had no opportunity to read them.

The little girl's name was Margery—and she looked absurdly like Allingham. At the foot of the card in childish handwriting was written,

"To Uncle Captain, from Margery."

But Parker knew that "Uncle Captain" had not really been Margery's uncle. He had been a cousin of Allingham's and the money involved in settling the Barraclough estate between them had been Barraclough's primary incentive for making trouble. Parker was quite sure he had never really cared anything about the woman.

Allingham, when he was able to do so at

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all, looked at Margery's picture first. He had not seen even a photograph of her in seven years. And though he looked upon her now in a kind of feverish haste, even his distorted, bloodshot vision knew at once that Barraclough had lied. Lied as damnably as any man could lie to another.

Anybody could see at a glance that Margery was Allingham's.

After a while he turned slowly to the photograph of his wife. A shadow crossed his face; a shadow that hurt. His mouth tightened and for several long and heavy seconds, there was no saying what surging tumult was going on behind the cloud. Then stonily, as if he were dragging his head around, he glanced at the picture of Margery again.

The shadow passed. Allingham smiled. His chin jerked upward briskly.

"All right, Parker. Thanks. I'll keep these."

He reached his feet, and the Great Dane almost completely forgot the man's rags.

For Allingham Barraclough was rather more than a man just then. He had gone down into the nethermost depths and had climbed back into the light of day almost without blinking. And this, admittedly, is the attribute of a god.

"Let's get back to Segwanga," he suggested simply. "I'd like a bath."

SOME SHOOTING

by Hugh Pendexter

AFTER being defeated in politics Davy Crockett decided to go to Texas. As he put it:

"I now start upon my own hook, and God grant it may be strong enough to support the weight that may be hung upon it. I have a new row to hoe, a long and hard one, but come what will, *I will go ahead.*"

Then he attended a farewell political meeting of his constituents, and among other things told them:

"I've been knocked down and dragged out, and I don't consider it a fair fight anyhow you can fix it. I am done with politics, and you may all go to ——, and I'll go to Texas."

Believing that he could retrieve his lost political power, he took a Mississippi steamer down to the Arkansas with full faith in his star and confident that he would make his way to "the head of the heap." After sailing up the river three hundred miles he came to a collection of huts called Little Rock. The group of men on the bank he assumed was there to give him an ovation, for his Washington experience had accustomed him to cheering crowds. On landing he was surprized that none paid him any attention.

But this ignorement was due entirely to the fact that none of the group knew he was the redoubtable Davy. Once they learned his identity he was given a dinner and asked to participate in a rifle-shoot. For his fame as a marksman had crossed the Mississippi and was known wherever men depended on guns for life and living. Davy willingly accepted the invitation. Before starting on his trip his admirers had given him a beautiful rifle, which he called "Betsy," as he did all his rifles. Shooting last, he raised the rifle and carelessly fired, hitting the center of the bull's-eye.

"There's no mistake in Betsy," he blandly told them.

"Colonel, that must have been a chance shot," one of his hosts remonstrated.

"I can do it five times out of six any day in the week," he calmly replied.

Nothing would do now but a second trial. And he admits in his biography that he was very reluctant to shoot again. His opponents shot much better. Then he advanced and said, "Look out for a bull's-eye, stranger." He fired.

"And I wish I may be shot if I didn't miss the target," he confesses. The men jeered and called it a dead miss. But he was not done.

"Stand aside and let me look, and I warrant you I'll get on the right trail of the critter." Running to the target, he examined it sharply and yelled:

"Here it is! There is no snakes if it ain't followed the very track of the other."

Stepping aside, he waved his hand for the men to search; and sure enough they found the second bullet on top of the first. But Davy confesses that he picked the second bullet from the ground and stuck it into the hole when he was examining the target.

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NEMESIS PLAYS A HAND

BY T·VON ZIEKURSCH

Author of "John Blanket's Lead Dog," "Desert Breed," etc.

OF COURSE I ain't sayin' nothin' about the laws of marriage. Whether you run with her under a blanket, or a shamaan does the honors the way they used to up here among the Sticks and Chilcats, or his reverence, the Little Father down at the Post, does it, it's all the same. The general principle of it don't change none nohow.

"What I'm sayin' is if you live in a country where you don't like the tax rate or some other fool laws you can change countries. There ought to be some such arrangement about this here marriage. 'Course I ain't talkin' none from experience, never havin' had none of it myself, but I've sure seen others what has. And it looks to me like it ought to be an equitable proposition all around. When one party goes bad the other should be able to bust the partnership."

Old Pop Murnane picked up the heavy dog whip and thumped the crude table that was the pride of the cabin in order to emphasize his point. A babel of snarls arose outside as one of the husky dogs, slower than the others at gulping the frozen whitefish, sought to ward off the significant advances of the rest.

Everybody along Pelly River liked Pop Murnane even before his trick in the Mounted ran out and he joined us in the bottoms where some of us still swung a wicked pan and strained our eyes looking for yellow dust.

He had a sandy mustache that somebody aptly said looked like a weeping mulberry in November, meaning, of course, the way it trailed down over his mouth, especially when he came in off the trail and there were icicles hanging on it from his breath.

Pop had his claim staked off twenty-five miles up the gorge, and being nearest neighbors we naturally drifted toward each other after a month or so without hearing a human voice made one or the other of us lonesome.

I had intended going down to Forty Mile that Winter to spend a few months with the crowd until things opened up again, but the river froze ahead of time so I stayed at the cabin and prepared to get in some extra caribou meat as soon as the snow eased up.

Murnane picked up the whip and went to the door to separate the dogs which had apparently not settled their friendly differences yet. When he came back the tea was boiling hard and he cast a longing eye on it. Then he picked up the narrative as though there had been no interruption while I did the honors with his favorite beverage.

"As I was sayin', this marriage stuff would be a lot better if it wasn't so all-fired hide-bound by custom and precedent and the likes."

He stopped a minute as though meditating, then went on—

"And some men sure has funny notions about honor."

I loaded a pipe and chucked one of the wolfskins at the door, for the wind was whipping up hard and coming in around the bottom to chill things. Then I was all set for one of Pop's stories. Almost everybody figured he was a grim, silent old sourdough

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without a spark of the thing that you put down as plain human feelings. But they liked him just the same, probably because his eyes twinkled whenever he did talk.

However, a few of us knew different about that human stuff. I remember the time he went thirty miles through a blizzard to bring in a red with a broken thigh, and he always fed his dogs in Summer, which was more than a lot of others did. Also there was a story about him bringing in an Eskimo murderer from up Coronation Gulf way while he was still in the Mounted. I may have forgotten some of the particulars, but the main part of it was he only had enough grub for two when he started north—himself and the prisoner he was out to get. When he came back he had two extras, the man's wife and kid who had insisted on coming along instead of staying up there to starve. And Pop had been on quarter rations for a month so the woman and kid could keep going.

Now he had slumped across the end of my spare bunk and was gazing admiringly at a long plug of the blackest tobacco I ever saw, not even excepting the pigtail stuff you meet along the Barbary Coast. One end of it disappeared under the weeping mulberry mustache and the rest of it came out a moment later minus the end.

Pop's eyes were staring at the fire and his head nodded while his eyes twinkled.

"Did you ever think of that?" he asked, and I waited.

He looked up.

"I mean about the queer notions some men has about honor," he went on and I shook my head negatively.

I HAD a funny experience some time back while I was still in the Mounted, that made me think a lot about this marriage stuff since then (he proceeded).

Happened before you come in with that pretty-lookin' gun of yours.

This drew a smile, for that pet rifle was a thing that warmed my heart even if it did make some people laugh because it had a highly polished stock.

I was patrollin' up west of Tanana in those days, he went on, and we had our hands full with the bunch of chechakos that come up expectin' to pull up nuggets like cobblestones, and never half of them botherin' about how much grub they brought in for the Winter.

There was three of them come in that next Spring—I never bothered findin' out how they come to team up. One of them was a big geezer named Remmerson—packed about two hundred pounds on his bones. He had a wife, sort of a slim, gritty little thing with fair looks. The kind that don't never say much but smiles it all out instead, shy-like.

The other party was a youngster whose first name was Marshall, and you can go to —— for his last name. I forgot it a-purpose. Maybe you'll see why. Anyhow he was a quiet kid, well set up, sort of wiry-like, the kind that goes best on the trail.

This Remmerson was whining when I met up with them, and when he wasn't cussin' things in general he was cussin' his wife, which made me like him plenty. At first I wondered about a lot of things. I couldn't figure why they come in alone, but I guess most of the old-timers had this Remmerson sized right. There's somethin' about his kind you never miss when you've hit the trail with men a lot. Pretty soon I could see why the big fellow stuck to Marshall. The kid had picked up the knack of handlin' a dog team somewheres and knew a few things about the woods. Told me afterward he had worked in a lumber camp one season.

Well, it takes the North to bring out all the best or the worst that's in a man, and you know that same as I do. They may look good and listen good down where the apples grow and you can ride on the cars whenever it snows. But up here you see 'em close, and when they whine and cuss a woman or steal grub, well, maybe they do look good in the city, and I'll bet that's where she fell for Remmerson.

I left 'em quick when I was sure this Marshall kid would pull 'em through, for I was an officer of the law and didn't want to beat that big bum up the way he deserved. They located at the head of a likely lookin' gulch and threw up a couple of cabins, one for Marshall and the other for Remmerson and his wife. The kid stuck alright and I figured it was because he pitied the woman—she wasn't much older'n him, two or three years maybe.

I steered clear of them all that Summer, but when Fall started to come I went up their way a-purpose and stuck around when

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I saw how things was goin'. She had a big bump on her forehead that looked like it had been made by knuckles not long before I arrived, and Marshall's jaws was so tight every time he set eyes on Remmerson the muscles looked like he was chewin' this twist. But he wasn't. Not that boy. He was mad, and when men gets mad like that up here they usually do things you have to run 'em down for. I guess it's the way of the North.

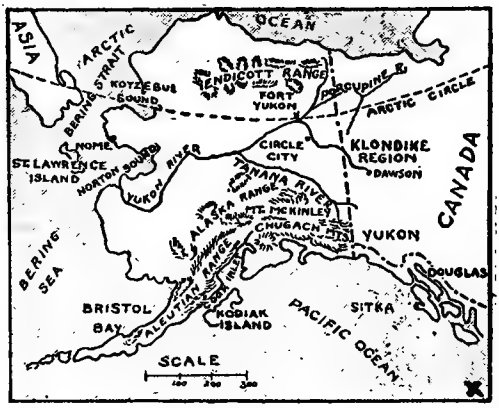
They had hit fair pay-dirt, not rich, just enough that a couple seasons would see them with a comfortable load of dust to take out. I tried to tell Remmerson that he ought to get out with his wife before the Winter hit 'em. But he was afraid Marshall would stay and get most of the dust. My fingers itched like I wanted to swing a dog whip on him, especially when I heard him talkin' to her, but I was an officer of the law.

Maybe I ain't never been married and don't know nothin' about women, but I saw her lookin' at Marshall a couple of times, and when a woman's eyes is soft and wet like that it ain't because she hates what she's lookin' at. I would have pulled the grubstake law on them, but they had plenty of food and it wouldn't work. Maybe you don't recall it, but in those days so many chechakos, as we used to call the newcomers, got froze and starved that they had to show enough grub and equipment or get out back to town when Winter come.

Well, I had a big territory to cover so I left them, figurin' to keep an eye in their direction whenever I got a chance. I was afraid of what might happen after the Winter settled down.

Come about three weeks of hard weather durin' which I was mushin' up and down along the Yukon near the frontier, and then I went back their way. When I come into their gulch I saw it had happened, whatever it was. The door of Marshall's cabin was wide open and the other had been battered out from the inside. Only a big man could have busted his way out like that, and I figured it right that Remmerson had been locked in for there was a busted pole still swingin' across the openin' where the door had been smashed out.

Their trail was easy enough. Marshall and the girl or woman, whichever you want to call her, had mushed off together on snowshoes, goin' northwest toward the river. I saw what they was after with the



towns in that direction only three hundred or so miles away. By the way the tracks looked I judged Remmerson must have been at least six or seven hours in back of them, but he had the dog team. I wondered why Marshall hadn't taken it, probably didn't want to touch anything belongin' to Remmerson.

I could almost hear that kid shoot when I started after them, and maybe I hoped he wouldn't be so mad he'd miss the first shot. But I knew I'd have to go get him and bring him to trial, and a man who runs off with another man's wife and shoots the other man in the bargain don't stand much chance before a judge, especially up here. Thinkin' it all over I whipped up my dogs and set out hot foot. 'Course I was in much better shape than any of 'em except Marshall maybe, but they did some tall travelin' and I didn't seem to gain much the first couple days.

Then I saw Remmerson was havin' trouble with the dogs. You could see where they were turnin' around and layin' down in the snow. Once there was a place where they must have raised the ——. There was blood on the snow either from him or from where he had been clubbin' them with the butt of the whip. Somehow he kept 'em goin' and I could see the girl was gettin' tired. Her tracks wabbled a lot. Maybe Marshall misjudged her strength and hit too fast a pace.

That second night I didn't make any camp, and by morning I knew Remmerson wasn't far ahead. A couple of hours later I heard him cussin' and the dogs snarlin' and scrappin'. I caught up to him and he was havin' ——'s own time. He'd started out in such a hurry he forgot to load up

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with grub for the dogs, and they was makin' a pretty mean fuss, ready to eat the whip out of his hand or each other if they got a chance.

I straightened 'em out for him, and he cussin' me and the law and his woman and Marshall all the while. But I took it and tried to tell him he better turn back to the cabins with me. Would he listen—not him! Just cussed me and wanted to know why I didn't go get his woman and the man she was runnin' off with. Called her some sweet names, too.

"To —— with me, I'll take care of myself," he yells when I try to reason with him. "Go get them, you —— cheap cop. I want to use this dog whip on them both before I kill him."

I was set to knock him down, but I smiled cool-like and says:

"I'm here to enforce the laws. If he's runnin' off with your wife I'll go get them, but you better watch out for that dog team. They're goin' bad."

He calls me some more names and tells me he can kill the —— dogs, so I starts off fast like after Marshall and the girl, leavin' him standin' there sayin' things no son of a woman ought to say. Some time later I thought maybe I heard a rifle shot and a scream. I stopped to listen, but didn't hear nothin' more 'cept the wind and figured I must be dreamin'. 'Course, maybe I didn't turn my ears back far enough, but you know how it is when the wind whips up right smart in the brush and the tree trunks cracks like guns in the cold. You get to imaginin' most anything.

I waited a spell and then went on, thinkin' I'd sure of heard it if he had a real ruckus on his hands. But that night I saw two of his dogs sneakin' through the brush ahead. One of 'em still had a bit of the trace hangin' from its neck.

Somehow I didn't make as good time after that, not wantin' to push my dogs any harder than I could help, for there was a good chance it would be a long trail. However, five days later I caught up with them. The girl was all in, but I could see she was still smilin' when Marshall whirled around and got the drop on me.

I didn't stick my hands up, but neither did I throw my gun.

"Listen, sonny," I says. "Looks to me like the lady better ride my sled till we get to the Post."

He never answered and we didn't talk much.

I was with them over a week on the trail and had the whole situation sized up in a couple of days. The kid was eatin' his heart out for her, and I mentioned before that what she thought of him was fairly stickin' out of her eyes. But he wasn't makin' love to her none, for she was another man's wife. Then he told me he was just aimin' to take her down to some place where she could get a boat back to the States so's she would be rid of that brute the law had tied her to.

He didn't say it, but I knew he was plannin' to go back and settle things with Remmerson. Then he would have stayed up here and brooded the rest of his life away. That was his code of honor. I've met his kind before. He'd have figured it all out wrong that he come between a man and his wife, and no matter what happened he would never be able to tell her how he felt. 'Course the fact that Remmerson was the kind of a boiled grizzly he was wouldn't have made no difference.

It was hard goin' for the dogs till we got her into the Post, and I makes 'em wait till the priest shows up. They don't know how to take it when I brings him in with his book and he marries them. She turns white and starts to protest while Marshall looks like his face was full of fever. But I shut 'em both up, and when the priest asks if either one of 'em ever was married before I speaks up.

"Yes," says I. "The lady was, but she's a widow now."

She fainted of course, but it wasn't with sorrow, and when I turned back into my territory they was just startin' down the river with the mail sled, to be ready to go out, back to the States, when Spring come. They had half the dust and the rest of it was still at Remmerson's cabin, for they had played all square.

POP halted his narrative and reached for his pipe, lit it and puffed contentedly. I waited in vain for him to continue, trying to straighten it all out in my mind. At last I blurted—

"But you made that woman commit bigamy. She was not a widow."

That familiar old twinkle appeared in his eye.

"Yes she was," he insisted. "I knew

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Remmerson couldn't handle those dogs. They was half-wolf and awful hungry. But that was his lookout—I was there to enforce the laws which don't permit a man to run off with another man's wife if the husband happens to object. And he called me a cheap cop and made me go after 'em, which I did. But when I come back I found his gun right there where he cussed me out. There was one empty shell in it, showin' that he'd managed to fire one shot, so maybe my ears hadn't been playin' me tricks after all. And his belt buckle was layin' there all rusty, but the belt was gone."

Pop puffed deep clouds of smoke out, filling the cabin with a rich blue-gray haze. Outside the wind whipped hard particles of snow against the walls with a metallic sound. The twinkle disappeared from Pop's eyes as he added—

"Them dogs was awful hungry, and when a husky is hungry he's mighty dangerous to anybody except a man what knows how to handle him."

AS THE SPILE DRIVER TOLD IT*

by Frank Parker Stockbridge

YES, I've been runnin' steam engines f'r more than fifty years,
An' the more I studies their habits, the certainer it appears
That human bein's came closest to God an' the angels when
They first created steam engines an' set 'em to work f'r men;
F'r of all of man's inventions, from now 'way back to the Flood,
Steam engines comes the nearest to bein' like flesh an' blood.

Gas engines has their merits—they pack more power to the pound—
But that's no great advantage, so long as you stay on the ground,
An' when it comes to flyin' I'll wait till they make a machine
That ain't so darned dependent on havin' its gasoline.

Steam engines, now, are human, just like a man or a mule.
They ain't so darned partic'ler about what they have f'r fuel.
If there ain't no coal pile handy there's other tricks you can turn,
F'r there ain't no part o' creation you can't find somethin' to burn;
Blubber or hay or cactus—I've got up steam with 'em all—
An' I even fired a b'iler without no fuel at all!

That was up in the Andes mountains, a-top o' the timber line,
On a pumpin' job—unwaterin' the Cerro de Pasco mine.
Seventy miles from the railroad, three miles up in the sky—
She'll bile at a hundred an' eighty—when you get up that high.
We fired her a while on cordwood that we packed up on llamas, which
Is a stinkin', half-baked camel, till the *cholo* choppers got rich
An' quit in a bunch, one payday; we might ha' been shut down yet
If me an' the head geologer we hadn't ha' made a bet.

*See statement in Camp-Fire.

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He said right where we was workin' was an old volcano's spout,
An' there must be fire in the mountain still if we only could get it out.
I told him if he'd locate it I'd hook it up some way,
An' he said I couldn't do it, so I bet him a whole month's pay.
I thought the youngster was bluffin'; but the boy was there with the dope,
F'r he showed me a hot spring b'ilin' a little ways down the slope.

Well, I screwed up a coil o' steam pipe an' shoved it down in the hole,
An' she turned that engine over just like we was burnin' coal.
She wouldn't get up much pressure, but I rigged a condensin' gear,
An' we pumped them Spanish workin's dry on a half of an atmosphere!

I never seen a gas engine that hadn't a yellow streak.
But steam engines act like people; they'll do everything but speak.
A Diesel comes in handy—if you're talkin' o' submarines;
But the whole internal combustion tribe—they're nothin' at all but machines.
They'll deliver their rated horsepower, but when they've done that they stop;
Just give 'em a pound of overload, an' there's junk all over the shop.

Now, a good steam engine is human; it's got what you might call guts
To tackle a job that's twice its size without any "ifs" or "buts;"
Like a man that's gone to his limit, but still makes good on his nerve,
It's the same with your old steam engine—there's always power in reserve.
Throw all your drafts wide open, fasten your pop-valve tight,
Give her the steam an' watch her pull you over the peak all right.

At Rangoon, with a floatin' derrick, I was loadin' teak on to ships,
An' I made good friends with an elephant that worked in the timber slips.
We used to chin in the evenin's, when he came down f'r his bath,
An' I'd toot good night with my whistle, an' he'd toot back up the path.
One day we shifted our moorin's, an' when this big boy came along
He started to wade up toward us, when I seen there was somethin' wrong.
He stopped short off in his splashin' an' hollered to me f'r help,
An' I never heard nothin' more pitiful-like than to hear that elephant yelp.
He'd stepped right into a quicksand, a dozen feet from the scow,
An' 'twas up to me to save him, an' the only question was how.

I grabbed the end of a log-chain an' went right over the side
An' yelled to my Burmah fireman to open his dampers wide
An' throw some pitch in the firebox, to get all the head we could,
While I got a hitch round the elephant, a-sinkin' there where he stood.
I dived right under his belly an' I hauled that log-chain tight
Right back o' the big boy's shoulders, before he sank out o' sight;
Only his trunk was showin', a-tootin' a farewell blast,
Before I could swing the derrick round an' make the h'ist gear fast.
Then I pulled my throttle over, an' I reckon I prayed a bit
That my old steam engine 'd tackle the load—an' she stood right up to it!

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I don't suppose no engine had ever took no such strain
Since steam was first discovered, an' none won't never again.
It stretched that wire cable, it buckled the derrick mast,
It sprung the boom like a fish-pole—but all the tackle held fast.
F'r mebbe a couple o' minutes I didn't know what to think,
F'r instead o' the elephant risin' the scow was beginnin' to sink;
But just as the strain got tightest, an' the engine almost stopped,
The sand let go in a hurry, an' up the elephant popped
Like a mud-cat caught on a fish-hook an' squealin' to beat the band.
He looked more scared than happy as I swung him over to land.
He pretty near wrecked the derrick before I could save my chain;
Then he ran down the road a-tootin' an' I never seen him again.

Yes, a fifty-horse steam engine, like that one, it's a cinch
Will give you a hundred easy, an' mebbe more, in a pinch;
An' that's just one o' the reasons, when there's good hard work to do,
Men always pick a steam engine, because it'll see 'em through;
Though h'istin' a five-ton elephant, with four feet stuck in the mud,
Ain't part o' the specifications, an' ain't been since the Flood.

Old Noah must ha' done it to get 'em on to his boat,
F'r an elephant's mighty balky when it comes to bein' afloat,
An' while it don't say in the Bible they had any power on the Ark
It certainly stands to reason that such a mechanical shark
Would ha' rigged some kind o' steam engine, an' I'll bet, if the truth came out,
'Twas a little old simple high-pressure, like the one I'm talkin' about.

I ain't never been to college, but a fellow that worked with me
Told me all about them pyramids that was built in the year B. C.
I was runnin' a big rope telpher at a place called Assuan,
Conveyin' concrete to build that dam—a mile an' a quarter span—
An' I seen them p'inted rock piles as we was a-passin' through
A place down there called Cairo, like that town down near Nauvoo.
They was built by a king named Cheops—at least they think he's the one—
An' from what this fellow told me I figgered out what he done.
It seems that a chap named Hero, that lived down there by the Nile,
Had invented the first steam engine, an' Cheops gave it a trial;
He hadn't got on to the slide-valve; so they only got power one way.
But it piled them darned big rocks up, an' it piled 'em up to stay!

I don't care much f'r adventures an' I don't like to travel round,
Exceptin' to go where the job is, an' I like to stay on the ground.
So I never ran on a steamship—just off an' on, you might say—
An' I got darned tired o' the railroad with the same towns every day.
So I don't know these modern dewdads like superheaters an' such,
Though from what I hear about 'em they don't amount to much.
An' when it comes down to turbines, I ain't very up to date,
Though I run one, up to Stockholm, in eighteen eighty-eight.

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I handled a Corliss engine once in a Cuban sugar mill,
An' a compound, down in Australia, in a mine at Broken Hill.
These triple expansion engines, now, I reckon they're all right
If you've got a couple o' oilers to keep the brass work bright.
But a little old simple high-pressure without any fancy frills
You don't never have to worry an' you don't have to pay no bills
F'r special parts an' fittin's; f'r a fellow that's any good
Can repair any part that's busted with iron or leather or wood.

On a dredger up there at Nome, once, the main crank bearin's wore out,
An' I didn't have no more babbitt an' I thought I was up the spout
Till an idee sort o' struck me, an' I went an' asked the boss
F'r a couple o' pounds o' nuggets—it was that or stand the loss
O' six weeks time f'r the outfit; so he done like he was told,
An' I bushed them crank-shaft bearin's with twenty-four carat gold!

You can patch a b'iler with rawhide, like I done once down in the Rand;
An' ile y'r bearin's with butter, like I had to at Samarkand.
I've run with hickory pitman, when I couldn't get to a smith,
An' I used raw silk in China once to pack my piston with.
That's why I say steam engines is the nearest critters to folks—
A smash or two don't knock 'em out, but they take the bumps as jokes;
They don't lay down on you when it's cold or quit because it's too hot,
But you treat a good steam engine right, an' she'll give you all she's got!

I seen a piece in the paper where some professor said
Some day we could take an atom about as big as your head
An' get enough power out of it to pump the ocean dry,
An' irrigate all the deserts, to keep up the food supply,
An' turn all the ships an' railroads an' turn all the factory wheels
An' have enough power left over to run all the automobiles.
I don't know much about atoms, but I'm willin' to bet you a hat
That if ever they get 'em workin' it'll be long after that
Before they'll scrap the steam engines, f'r off in the corners where
There ain't no atoms handy an' there's work to be done right there,
They'll be firin' up the old b'ilers, with coal or cordwood or cobs,
An' givin' the old steam engines another whack at their jobs;
F'r as long as there's human bein's there's bound to be some, you see,
That understands steam engines an' was born to run 'em, like me.

Well, I'll be through with this job here as soon as I drive this spile,
An' then I think I'll try it in Mexico f'r a while,
An' mebbe I'll settle down there, f'r I ain't no hand to roam,
An' I've been lookin' f'r fifty years f'r a place I could call my home.
I don't much care where I find it— 'most any place under the sun
Will do if they'll give me a steady job an' a good steam engine to run.

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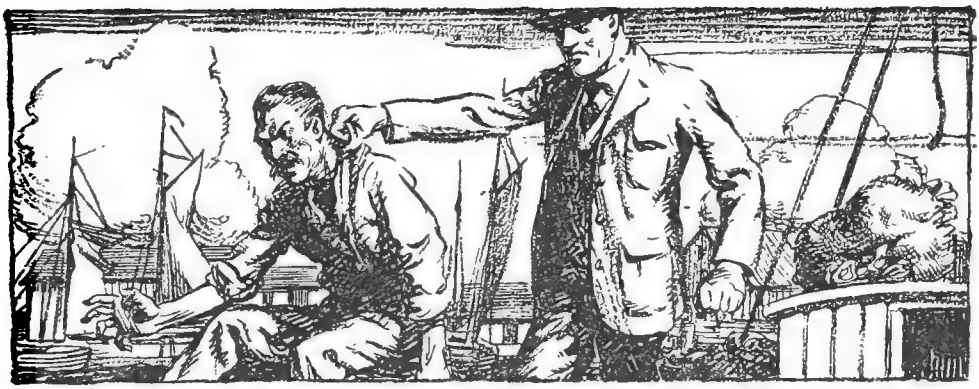

THE DUCKLEGGER

BY HERMANN B. DEUTSCH

Author of "The Wooing of Placide Dumaine," "Gran Mobi's Jest," etc.

THROUGH a drizzling warm January rain, over a road so soft that it might have bogged a buzzard's shadow, Bob Keller kept his kicking little automobile somehow headed east by the side of the interminable, winding levee.

"What you need, Lizzie," he apostrophized his chariot as it slithered over the greasy mire of the road, "is a propeller, or a span of mules—or something."

He wrenched lustily at the steering-wheel as a wide gray puddle opened up before him and "Lizzie" squattered gamely into it.

"Luff, ye lubber, luff," he commanded, while he opened wide the hand-trottle and went grinding into low gear.

Rattling, with a jerk here, and a gasping kick there, and a cough which shook the little car from radiator cap to differential, they splashed to the puddle's yonder shore and regained terra infirma.

"I'll say it's good weather for ducks," commented Bob with intense conviction. "But I wish we had the chief here, Lizzie, so's we could show him what one of those pretty duck letters means."

The "chief" was the conservation commissioner of Louisiana. The letter in question was a brief missive, typed on the department's beautifully embossed official stationary, informing conservation agent Robert Keller that the New Orleans market was being flooded with ducks—pintail, mallard, wood duck, and teal—in spite of the stringent prohibition against the sale of wild fowl.

Things had changed a good deal since the war, Bob reflected. Not long ago the market hunters invaded the business district of New Orleans daily, during the duck season, their wares slung in pairs about their shoulders, from the lordly, yellow-footed French mallards, which cost a dollar and a half a pair, to the lowly black and white speckled *dogris*, which brought twenty-five cents apiece.

But the Federal Government had signed a treaty since that day concerning birds whose migrations were international. *Egouillet de Canard Paradis*, which Jules Alciatore had invented in honor of a banquet tendered to President Taft, vanished from the bill of fare at Antoine's. The full penalty of the law was invoked against those who sold ducks, or who killed them for other than personal use.

The fat Louisiana marshes, black with wild waterfowl during the Winter months, proved too much of a temptation for the 'Cajan market hunters, however. Prices went a-soaring, of course; but those epicures who were discreet might still know the delights of a *jambalaya* in which the tender pink of cooked shrimp, the black lumps of succulent meat from the breast of the mallard, chopped oysters, pecans and snow-white Louisiana rice blended their flavors in a manner that would have enthused old Lucullus himself.

Thus to the duties of the conservation

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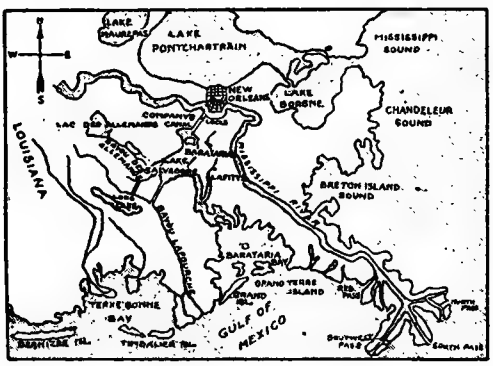
department—that harrassed institution which must keep a governmentally paternal eye on the gas fields of the north to check the production of carbon black; which must watch sharp the oyster beds to see that no bivalves less than three years old are harvested by the oystermen; which must collect severance taxes from the shippers of furs; which must see to it that each of the "gazzoleen" trawls and seines of the shrimping fleet pays its just meed into the treasury of the State—to all this was added the additional task of checking the professional hunters to see that no wild ducks were offered secretly for sale in the New Orleans market.

The conservation agents were inclined to take this duty lightly. Hence the occasional crisp letters from the commissioner, reminding them that only results and not excuses found any place on the departmental records. Hence, too, Bob Keller's



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trip in the weeping gray of a Thursday dawn for the mouth of the Company's Canal—that waterway which leads from the Mississippi, opposite New Orleans, through Lake Salvadore, into the Barataria country of Jean Lafitte and Dominique You, and thence through the cane and reed clad marshes into the sea-grass islands that fringe the open Gulf.

Once more Lizzie squattered into a broad gray puddle; once more Bob pressed a disproportionately heavy foot down upon the grinding low-gear pedal. Lizzie shook and jerked and coughed, staggered forward, wavered, and with a sudden mad racing of the noisy motor, came to an abrupt and roaring halt.

Bob swore wearily, set the hand-brake, pushed up the gas throttle as far as it would go, opened the far door and heaved his great bulk out of that.

"And all for a crummy pair of *pulldoes* or *dogris!*" he lamented as he splashed knee-deep into the puddle, which was none too warm.

He looked the situation over critically, shut off the ignition, walked to the rail fence bordering the road opposite the levee, seized the top rail in two great paws, braced himself, heaved mightily, and—the rail came away.

Back into the puddle he sloshed his way, taking soundings from the rear of the car to see which wheel was spinning free. Putting the full force of his big frame into the effort, he wrenched his fence-rail under the wheel to give it solid footing.

Once more he clambered into the car, wedged himself back of the steering-wheel and advanced the throttle. No luck. One wheel was still missing traction. Easing the pedal back into high gear, so that one back wheel was spinning merrily while the other remained motionless, Bob splashed out to the back of the little car, placed one shoulder against the black tin tonneau—and pushed.

Not for nothing had an imaginative newspaper reporter once nicknamed him "Hick'ry-Back Bob." Lizzie went away from there. She went until her treads caught gummy mud once more and, being in high gear and an uncertain creature anyway, promptly stalled.

Bob climbed back aboard, fumbled around with one big foot until it found the starter button and then proceeded, skidding and slithering, on the very muddy way to the big lockgate that pierced Father Mississip's levee at the mouth of the Company's Canal.

He crossed the canal at Westwego, in the shadow of the towering lock-gates, to find the customary Thursday morning rush. The banks of the canal seemed literally acrawl with all the small craft that make up the sea-food fleet.

Here a dumpy lugger was unloading basket after basket of fat hardshell crabs, in process of transshipment to the motor trucks on which they would be ferried across the Mississippi and go roaring down to the Old Town—"the *Vieux Carre*"—and its French Market. There a trim schooner was transshipping fresh-caught shrimp and

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cracked ice, with great, long-handled shovels of netting, into another motor truck.

Sacks of oysters were being taken from this boat. Great palmetto-bound bundles of sea-fish—speckled trout, sheephead, redfish, drum and croaker—from another. Boatmen were bargaining lustily with hosts of shoppers who came each Thursday morning direct to the mouth of the Canal to buy the Friday supply of fish—some for reasons of economy, others because they sought the assurance of freshness which such purchases brought with them.

Rattle-engined little motor trucks shouldered glossy black limousines, while huge five-tonners nosed impatiently for berthing way among the flivvers that flocked to the bank. Negroes driving mule-powered floats, an occasional galloping horseman, squalling children and shrill-voiced women buyers—all these added to the din and the uproar into the thick of which Bob Keller, mud-spattered and short of temper, shouldered his heavy way.

Head and broad shoulders above the swampmen he stood. Most of the latter were short of stature, but none the less amazingly strong and wiry. Bob Keller gave the groups through which he made his way scarcely a second glance. He was searching for one special vessel—the one in which he would be most nearly certain to find contraband if this were indeed the port of entry for the forbidden shipments of wild fowl. This vessel was the dingy, blue-and-white striped "gazzoleen" boat of Octave Caillet.

Bob and Octave had met before—once when Bob's testimony in the Lafourche district court relative to certain oyster-poaching operations had resulted in the assessment of a heavy fine on the little boatman; and once again when Bob had conveyed quietly to the men of the customs service the information that some of the sacks Octave's boat carried out of the Gulf to New Orleans held the sort of oysters one opened with a cork-screw instead of an oyster-knife.

Octave's schooner, the *Lady Fair*, was the untidiest of all the vessels that put-putted their way up the Company's Canal from Barataria. Where the other boats were painted a fiercely glistening white, renewed whenever it showed the least hint of wear, the original paint of the *Lady Fair* had been dulled by weather and salt water to a dingy ash gray, while the blue stripes of the coaming were worn to almost the same hue.

Reeking with the stale odor of fish and shrimp, crusted with dried scum, the *Lady Fair* was anything but inviting. Octave, who had no family, was snarling at the boy who constituted his "crew." He had taken the youngster, an orphan, from some cabin in the deep swamps, where death is a swift and frequent visitor. The boy's face was pock-marked; one saw at once what it was that had orphaned him.

"Which side de boat I tol' you to pile doze sack, eh?" Octave snapped at the lad, who cringed away.

The boatman took a step toward him, his open hand raised threateningly. As he did so, Bob Keller came scrambling down the steep canal-bank and leaped aboard—lightly enough, for all his great bulk.

"Howdy, Octavius, my bootleggin' friend," he greeted the oysterman. "Leave the kid be and come have a chat with Uncle Bob."

Octave growled a sullen "*Comment ça va*, Mist' Bob?" and made his way to the stubby foredeck. "What you want now, Mist' Bob? I ain't do nothin'—me!"

"Hope you're right, Octave. Just thought I'd take a look round."

He pulled down his hat-brim and from beneath it scanned the untidy vessel closely.

"I ought to report you to the board of health, even if I don't do nothin' else. Phew! Y'ought to bundle up chunks of this smell and sell it for souvenirs round Mardi Gras time."

His eyes came to rest on one sack, which, unlike the chunky, knobbed appearance of the oyster-laden bags, seemed to bulge in round swells.

"Why you always come an' pick on me, Mist' Bob?" asked Octave truculently. "I'm verree good man—yes. Why you don't leave me 'lone sometimes?"

"Aw shut up!" retorted Bob impatiently. "What you got in that sack?"

"Oyster—jus' plain weets*" answered Octave promptly. "Sure—sure so."

"No, I mean that other one over there—that fat one. Think I'm blind?"

"Onlee jus' oyster. An' I got a lease, too—me. I got all de oyster off my bed what I'm lease. You make me lease him—*hein?*" Octave grinned sourly.

'You and the truth get along well together, don't you? Just like sweet chocolate and

*Huitres (oysters.)

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garlic—or something," answered the conservation agent. "Now listen to me, *mung share amee.* I mean this sack right here."

He stepped around the squat cabin that housed the engine, to the after deck, seized the sack and flopped it, with a soft thud, to the decking.

"Now, what's in there? Mean to tell me a sack of oysters sounds like that when it falls down?"

"Ah—dat sack, Mist' Bob. He's got feesh in—him," stammered Octave. "Feesh what I catch in my seine and don' want fo' throw back—no."

"Fish!" snapped Bob derisively. "You better take a correspondence course in lying, or you'll never get ahead in this business. Now if you 'a' said it was cured moss, or something——"

The conservation agent had pulled out a large clasp-knife and with one heavy stroke had severed the string that latched the sack shut at the throat. He thrust one big hand within the opening.

"Fish! Feesh! Ah, wee, my Cajan friend! Feesh with feathers, y'old rip. You've quit bootleggin' and gone to duckleggin', ain't you, Octave! Well, well, looks like Uncle Bob's got you dead to rights again."

"But it is feesh—he mus' be feesh!" exclaimed Octave, gesticulating. "De man what leave de sack here—him—he's tell me to watch doze feesh till he come back fo' ten o'clock—yes, him! I swear like —— he say is fish in de sack, Mist' Bob!"

"So it isn't your sack at all?" grinned Bob. "Gee, Octave, that's too bad. You're about to get out of the strong clutches of the lawr, ain't you? But I reckon I better stick around and watch that sack, because I want to arrest that bird when he comes around to get his duck-fish. Don't mind if I sit here and take it easy, or something, do you?"

Octave muttered what might have been an assent, and Bob sat down on the cabin roof, lit a cigar and waited. He glanced with frank amusement at the driver of the little truck into which the oyster-sacks from the *Lady Fair* were being loaded.

That driver, now—he seemed suddenly to have been stricken with a severe case of the dance of St. Vitus. He was in extreme haste, and he neglected no opportunity to remind Octave of it. He wanted to get out of that *tooty sweety.*

Under the double focus of the driver's incessant chatter and Bob's amused regard Octave's temper broke off short. The only object upon which he could vent his spleen in safety was the boy—the "brocky-face orphan," as he was known along the canal. When the lad let his end of an oyster-sack slip to the wooden planking, so that the sharp-edged shells ripped the burlap and half a dozen or so of the stony bivalves cascaded out upon the deck, Octave sprang for him and sent him reeling across the deck with a cuff under the ear.

He drew back his foot, then, for a kick at the boy's prostrate form, but found his foot firmly caught and drawn suddenly farther backward than he had intended it to go; also farther backward than he was prepared for in the matter of balance. The net result was that he catapulted forward to the deck, landing mostly on his front teeth. He sat up with a howl of pain, and glared malevolently at Bob Keller, who was no longer smiling.

"Why you are mad on me—*hein?*" he cried. "What I've done you—me?"

"I'm not mad at you, Octave," replied Bob, his voice level. "If I was mad at you, I'd bust you in two and feed the chunks to the crabs. I was only playin' with you. You might remember that, Octave."

For just an instant Octave went berserk. Perhaps it was the crowd—men, women, and children, black and white—which had been drawn to the bank of the canal by the commotion. Perhaps it was that sudden forgetfulness of fear which comes upon occasion even to the most cowardly. At any rate he seized one of the spilled oysters as he scrambled to his feet and flung it full at the big conservation agent. As the latter dodged the missile Octave dived into the little cabin, and when he reappeared he had the handle of a long kitchen knife clutched in his fist.

The flash of the bright blade wrought a sudden change in Bob Keller. His lightness of manner vanished. One bound put him in arm's reach of the little swampman, and arm's reach was usually enough, where he was concerned.

One mighty hand twined itself into the collar of Octave's faded blue jumper, and before the newly christened ducklegger could raise his knife he was jerked from his feet and sailed shrieking and clucking into the greasy water of the canal.

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When he came gasping to the surface his knife was gone. He was beating the air and the water wildly with his hands, for, like most of the men who follow the sea, he could not swim. Kneeling on the boat's deck, Bob reached down and secured a fresh grip on the struggling man's collar and tugged him, flopping like some ungainly fish, to safety—comparative safety.

"I'm going to have to give you your needin's, my duckleggin' wildcat," declared the conservation agent. "You're too little and runty for me to hit you hard—likely they'd call on me for a witness at the inquest if I did, and I got no time for the court-room—but you got to remember that any time you get snooty with Uncle Bob, Uncle Bob's going to spank. Come and get it! Come and get it!"

A shout arose from the banks of the Canal. Business was suspended—gratefully—for the moment, by the closely packed watchers. The shout rose and waxed into a huge laugh, the while Bob, seating himself comfortably on deck, drew the kicking little form of Octave on to his lap and spanked him with a thoroughness that stopped just short of actual brutality.

When at the last Octave arose it was with the rage of black murder in his heart—a cold rage which kept him calm. Unmoved he followed Conservation Agent Bob Keller with his eyes as that thoroughgoing official opened sack after sack and spilled the contents out upon the littered deck, or else thrust in his hand in a sweeping search for more poached duck.

"When'd you say this party's coming back after his feathered fish?" he asked at length.

"Fo' ten o'clock," replied Octave dully.

"Well, it's after ten now. What'll I do with this sack?"

Octave made no response.

"You say it ain't yours?"

The oysterman shook his head in the negative.

"You don't care if I take it along with me then, do you? 'S long's it don't belong to you?"

"It ain't my sack—no," replied Octave.

"I know. I know. But even at that I better not leave it here. You might have to carry it around on that boat of yours if I did, and then you'd be shipping ducks without a license and I'd have to haul you up in Federal court. You don't want to run up against the Federal court again, do you—Mr. Ducklegger?"

Octave Caillet shook his head sullenly.

"And if I take it along," continued the agent, "why everybody'll be satisfied, specially the Confederate Veterans out at the Soldiers' Home, where the department'll send these ducks for a treat. Well, a pleasant time was had by all."

He shouldered the fat sack with effortless ease and started for shore. On the narrow gangplank he paused and turned to the boatman once more.

"Oh yes, Octave. Another thing. Don't get rough with that orphan kid after I'm gone, either. I might hear about it and—you know—uncle 'pank! Uncle 'pank real hard! It'll hurt you worse'n it does me, but it'll be for the good of your shriveled soul, you—you—duckleggin' swine!"

He sprang to the bank, but turned once more from the crest of the levee to look down upon the *Lady Fair*.

"I'm coming back every Thursday morning, Octave," he shouted by way of farewell. "I'm most liable to stick my hand in every sack on your greasy, dirty tub of a boat when I come, too; so don't let any more trusting strangers make you hold the bag for 'em, or something; not fo' ten o'clock or fo' no other time. *Ah, wee. Bum voyawj*, Octave! *Bum voyawj!*"

The set of his broad shoulders as he swung toward his car might have been less jaunty could he have read the black thoughts that seethed through the unkempt head of Octave Caillet, as the oysterman cast off from shore, later, and headed the *Lady Fair* back down the Company's Canal. Even the "brocky-face orphan," accustomed as he was to Octave's continuous nagging, was frightened at the man's new sullen taciturnity—at the sinister silence in which he brooded over his wrongs.

When they reached the palmetto-thatched camp where, far down Bayou Barataria, they pulled up that night, Octave maintained his wordless brooding over the supper of salt meat and snap beans cooked over a glowing charcoal brazier. Early the next morning they left camp; but instead of heading gulfward toward the oyster-beds Octave turned the bow of the *Lady Fair* back inland, traversing a maze of bayous and canals into the heart of the swamps. Passing his boy a bucket of stale shrimp,

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the oysterman gruffly ordered him to get out and catch a string of perch.

As soon as the youngster had disappeared around a bend of the bayou Octave set to work. Into the top of a light pole he drove a common iron staple. Then he laid pole and staple aside the while he searched and fumbled about the cluttered cabin until he came upon a draggled wisp that had once been a broom.

From the point at which the straw was fastened he carefully unwrapped the long binding-wire. One end of this he twisted firmly to the staple he had driven into the top of his light pole. The free end of the wire he thrust back into the staple, until only a springy loop, some seven inches in diameter, was left projecting beyond the tip of the pole; a loop which the least tug upon the free end of the wire would tighten and close.

Wadding an empty oyster-sack through his belt, he seized his pole with its springy wire loop and leaped ashore. Apparently the section of swamp through which he passed was a familiar one, for he made his way with no uncertainty as to direction.

Down a dim, cypress-studded aisle he hurried, past a clumsy but amazingly efficient dead-fall trap which had been set and baited for wild pigs; then straight across a shallow slough, where gaunt cypresses stretched their hairy arms skyward, while the knobby cypress knees projected from the ground like so many stalagmites from the floor of a limestone cavern.

A shallow fold in the moist, spongy ground led away from this grove, and it was this fold which Octave followed to the banks of a newly dug drainage canal, far inland. Hardened as he was to the hot, moist travel of the swamps, he was breathing heavily by the time he reached the new clay levees which bordered the canal. These lay steaming and bare under the hot January sun. Octave ran his eye appraisingly along the vast clay molehill for a moment, and then scrambled up nimbly and began to walk along the crest.

Less than a quarter of a mile had he journeyed thus, when he saw a dull black tangle—it was not a coil—basking on the warm, sun-baked clay. Taking the pole from his shoulder, he gripped it firmly in his right hand, while in his left he held securely the free end of the wire that ran forward to a springy loop. Gingerly he stretched forth his arms until the loop just brushed that dull black tangle on the ground before him. The tangle shifted dizzyingly, and from it there withdrew itself the flat, venomous, triangular head of a moccasin. No diamond-marked or banded water-snake this, to throw terror into picnic parties as a "water-moccasin," but the true moccasin—the reptile whose bite means death as surely as does the bite of rattler or cobra.

The snake did not coil; hissing, it drew the triangular head farther and farther back and up on a long, springy arch. Just as it seemed that this arch must overbalance and topple earthward, the snake launched itself forward, full at the tantalizing loop. The launching drove true, squarely through the loop, which instantly was drawn tight. While the snake, thus caught, thrashed wildly about, Octave transferred the tight-drawn wire from his left to his right hand, so that the latter clutched both pole and wire.

This freed his left hand, with which he fumbled at his belt until he had loosed the sack and spread it, open, on the ground before him. Into the open mouth of the sack he plunged the tip of the pole, with its writhing burden, running it down to the very bottom of the heavy burlap receptacle. Then and not till then he released the cramped grip with which he had held wire and pole in his right hand. Swiftly he withdrew the pole, while the loop opened out of itself and became once more a simple wire lash.

So intent was he still upon the task before him that he failed to note the pair of bright black eyes which had surveyed the scene from the reedy tangle of a near-by cane-brake—eyes that twinkled out from a round little pock-marked face.

Five such captures Octave effected before he turned back. When he reached the boat once more the brocky-face orphan was already aboard with a great string of fat, rainbow-hued perch. Octave cast his sack into the triangular deck-space ahead of the jack-staff, just at the bow of the lugger. He piled a few boxes and casks about it so that it would be impossible to step upon the sack accidentally, warned the boy not to go near it, and then, in high good humor, proceeded to help the lad clean and cook the fish.

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BOB KELLER, coming home from one of his trips a night or two later, had just moored Lizzie in the ancient wagon-shed which did duty as garage, and was turning toward the house, when a sibilant whisper coming from nowhere at all halted him in his tracks.

"Mist' Bob—oh, Mist' Bob!" a curiously soft voice repeated.

"Come out of that, whoever you are," commanded Bob sharply. "Come on, before I take a wagon-spoke to you, or something."

Out of the concealment of a spreading cluster of sweet olive shrubs there stole a small form, clad in faded blue shirt and draggled blue overalls and topped by a deeply pock-marked little face.

"Oh, it's you," hailed Bob in instant recognition. "'S matter, bub? That incombustible little ducklegger been workin' on you again?"

The boy shook his head in vigorous denial.

"Octave, he's laughin'—him! He ain't mad no mo'. But—but—you done made him quit beatin' on me, Mist' Bob, an'—all evenin' I come back by yo' pirogue ditch in my li'l pirogue, me. He's kill me, sho', Octave, if he finds out I'm come see you, Mist' Bob."

The lad glanced apprehensively over his shoulder as if he feared Octave might really have pursued him. Motioning the big conservation agent to bend down close, he began to whisper and completed his tale in breathless haste.

Bob straightened up sharply when he had heard the boy out.

"Son, I certainly am obliged to you," he said quietly. "Wow! You're sure about all this now, are you?"

The lad nodded.

"All right then. Now listen! You hustle back. Don't worry about me. Jump along. Skedaddle—hard. The quicker you're back the less chance there'll be about Octave findin' out you were gone, and as long as he doesn't find that out I'm all right. Now shoot along."

The boy literally melted away into the shadows in the direction of a drainage ditch which led back into the swamps from an adjoining rice field. Bob stood quietly for a moment, looking after him.

"That Octave, now," he finally apostrophized the garage, "he's about played out his string. I think maybe we'll have to eliminate Octave—or something."

IT WAS just after twelve o'clock that Wednesday night that Bob started out from his home for the mouth of the Company's Canal. Warm, sunny weather had worked a vast improvement in the condition of the roads, so that Lizzie bowled along merrily without undue loss of time. Back in the tonneau lay a curiously puffy sack. Once, when Bob looked back to see whether this piece of cargo was still in place, he chuckled merrily.

"It'll be a regular movie," he said to himself, half-aloud. "If Joe'll only remember to turn loose his little pop-gun at the right time, that duckleggin' little rat will have to emigrate right now."

Another chuckle terminated the brief soliloquy.

Bob did not drive across the canal bridge this time. Instead, he brought his little vehicle to a halt a hundred yards or so before the canal was reached, drawing up far out at the levee side of the road. Dismounting quietly, he reached into the tonneau for the sack and slung it easily on to his broad back. Thus burdened he trudged toward the canal.

He approached only close enough to see that, for the most part, the sea-food fleet had already arrived. Close-lined, the schooners and luggers were drawn up against the opposite bank.

From a point of vantage on the near levee Bob scanned the boats intently. Moving cautiously along, his eyes straining through the darkness, he scrutinized each vessel until at last he came to one whose stubby lines he recognized as belonging to Octave Caillet's "gazzoleen" lugger.

"That's number twelve—number twelve from the bridge. Better remember that, Bob," he muttered to himself. "You won't have much time to stop for introductions when the fun starts, even if Joe is on the job."

Mumbling, "Number twelve, number twelve," over and over to himself, he made his way back to a point a few yards from the bridge, and, possessing his soul in patience, sat himself down at a place where deep shadow afforded complete concealment.

The minutes dragged by slowly—almost interminably. Bob dared not strike a

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match to see what time it was, and he chafed irritably under the long strain of inaction.

"I'm in a sweet, sweet mess if Joe doesn't come through according to orders," he murmured once. "And I can't take a chance on sending him word that I'm here. Well——"

He settled back once more, but before he had fairly relaxed one shot and then another rang out sharply from somewhere beyond the opposite bank of the Canal.

Catching up his sack, he leaped to his feet.

"Worked like a charm," he chuckled as he watched the crews and skippers of the fishing-fleet leave their vessels and swarm ashore to see what the excitement might be.

Another shot followed. Waiting an instant longer to make sure that curiosity had momentarily depopulated the fleet, Bob ran lightly across the bridge with his burden, and then raced along the opposite bank, past the moored boats, counting as he ran.

At the twelfth vessel he crossed the levee and leaped aboard blindly. Crouching for a moment to make certain he was not observed, he stepped swiftly to the lugger's stubby bow, where, wedged in among some boxes and kegs, a sack lay on the untidy deck. For an instant the dense shadows of the foredeck engulfed him. Almost immediately he reappeared, leaped back ashore, and scurried over the levee.

Breathing a bit heavily, he returned to his car, wedged himself into the front seat and settled himself once more to wait. But there was no impatience in his waiting now. Quite to the contrary, it was not long until he had dozed off. He slept until the discomfort of cramped muscles aroused him.

By that time dawn had come, and in the early light he started his car. As noisily and obviously as possible he drove to the bridge, crossed it and drew up in the midst of the Thursday morning hubbub at the Canal bank.

Shouldering his way through the press, he mounted to the crest of the levee, and there looked about until he had picked out the dingy, faded blue and white of the *Lady Fair*. During this inspection he had hastily counted the boats between Octave's vessel and the bridge; he had counted them twice and was unfeignedly glad to note that the *Lady Fair* was indeed number twelve. Under the circumstances Conservation Agent Robert Keller was taking no chances.

Walking to the plank that led aboard the *Lady Fair*, Bob hailed the vessel's owner, who was busied about the hatchway in the small afterdeck.

"Hey, there, my duckleggin' marsh beauty," he called. "How's the incomparable Octave this morning? How you be, *mung amee?* Got any ducks aboard—or liquor—or something?"

Octave returned the greetings with a sour smile.

"Fo' what you always pickin' on me, Mist' Bob?" he asked.

"I got nothin' oanlee oysters off my lease—me."

"'S what they all say," agreed Bob solemnly. "Remember what I told you last time, don't you?"

Octave nodded in surly assent.

"Well, I'm here to make it good. Every sack you got aboard is going to get the strict and official once-over. Not that I don't trust you, Octave. I do. I trust you just as far as I can carry the Mississippi River in my vest pocket—implicitly, if you know what that means."

He sprang aboard. More or less perfunctorily he searched sack after sack of oysters, opening one here and there and half emptying it as if to satisfy himself that it hid no contraband.

"I'm sorry to say that you seem to be having a clean bill of health, Old Pain-in-the-Face," he commented at last. "I take that as deliberately unfriendly of you, fooling me like that. What makes you do so funny all of a sudden, Octave—disguising yourself as an honest man?"

He checked himself with a very creditable start then, and glanced sharply at a jumbled pile of boxes, crates and kegs at the vessel's bow.

"What's in that sack up there, Octave?" he barked.

"Jus'—jus' some things, Mist' Bob," replied the boatman apprehensively. "I got no ducks—no. You took the ver' las' duck what I got las' week."

"Bring me that sack and make it snappy," commanded Bob.

With a reluctance that was by no means all assumed Octave lifted the sack in gingerly fashion out of its resting-place and dragged it along the deck to the conservation agent.

"I got jus' plenty ol' things in dis sack—ah, yes—tha's all," he repeated.

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"For your own sweet sake, Octavius, I hope you're right," commented the conservation agent. "I'm free to admit that all I want in your case is an excuse; and it doesn't need to be much of an excuse, either. 'Most any little old second-hand shopworn excuse would do. And now—undo that sack!"

For the life of him, Octave could not keep his hands from trembling as if with a palsy while he fumbled with the latch-string that fastened the sack. Once he looked up mutinously at the towering figure beside him; but something he saw in Bob's eyes, suddenly grown frosty, sent him back at the task, knowing that if he betrayed his dread too openly all his fine plans for vengeance would come tumbling about his ears. Ages later he succeeded in undoing the string, and with a deep, quick breath of relief, he stepped away.

Bob bent over the sack, and Octave had hard work of it to stifle the little exclamation of triumph that rose to his lips at the thought of what would happen to the big man who had shamed him before the world, once the latter thrust his hand into the depths of that invitingly open and suspicious sack.

But Bob did no such thing. His right hand was fumbling in his pocket, and absently he motioned Octave closer.

"You empty it, Octave," he directed.

The boatman gasped. His knees felt as if the joints had turned to warm butter. Somehow—someway—Bob must have been able to read the secret of that sack. Perhaps he had heard a hiss. Perhaps——

With a strangling cry of fear Octave leaped away and made for the shoreward plank; but before he could set foot upon it he felt himself seized in a grip he knew only too well he could not break.

"I said," a mocking voice repeated in his ear, "I said, 'You empty it!' That means, you empty it. When I want you to go ashore, you yellow-fever germ, I'll tell you that, too. We will now empty the sack.

Octave's voice returned to him and he shrieked aloud, but the inexorable grip forced him to the sack, forced him to his knees beside it, and, suddenly shifting its clutch to his right forearm, just below the elbow, forced his hand into the open mouth of the bag. Screaming, he felt cold, clammy coils writhing within.

Dimly was he aware of men running toward the boat all along the bank, and then, stabbing its way into his consciousness, there came a sharp prick upon the back of his hand. Mad with fear, he wrenched himself free at the last and stumbled to the cabin, where he slumped down upon the deck and lay crouched, whimpering.

He did not see the crowd of onlookers clustered on the bank and on neighboring boats. He heard Bob Keller say to his deputy—

"Keep the crowd off, Joe—don't let a man aboard here."

But the words conveyed no meaning to him. Staring-eyed, his whole being was focused on two red dots half an inch apart on the back of his hand, each dot a tiny globule of blood. The very embodiment of fear, lips sagging loosely, eyes protruding, skin a pasty yellow, throat-muscles twitching convulsively, Octave stared glassily at those two tiny specks of crimson.

Yet something kept up a ceaseless drumming in his numbed mind—something that finally urged his terror-crazed faculties into co-ordination and sent him, shrieking once more, to his feet.

Bob's broad form barred his way. Heedless of aught but those two tiny blood-pricks, Octave flung himself at the agent. As well might he have flung himself at the near-by lock-gates.

And then, chattering deliriously, feeling in every tingling nerve-fiber already the pangs of approaching death—inescapable, horrible—Octave begged and pleaded for a chance to have his hurt looked after. He told much in that petition for help. But in his extremity he knew no peril save the peril that lay in those two pin-pricks on the back of his hand.

His frenzied, tumbling tale was finally interrupted by the conservation agent.

"All right, you louse. Cut it off!" commanded the latter. "You've said enough in the way of a confession to hang you nine times over—and there seem to be plenty of witnesses, too. You're so low down they'll have to take you to —— in a balloon when you finally do kick off. I got a good notion to let you do it right here and now—you look about ready to scare yourself into the hands of the nearest undertaker."

Collaring the luckless oysterman, he flung him full across the deck against the side of the cabin.

"Stand there a minute," he said, "till I

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show you what's turned your face the color of a catfish belly or your heart—or something."

Swiftly he upended the sack. Coil on coil of dark, glistening wet, inch-thick rope slipped to the untidy deck.

"Those wet pieces of rope feel mighty cold and clammy, don't they, Octave?" he mocked. "Feel almost like they might be half a dozen water moccasins—yes."

Petrified, Octave looked at the coils of rope in dawning comprehension of what had taken place. Bob broke into an uproarious laugh, which was caught up and multiplied a hundred fold by the crowd as the tension which had gripped them during the past few minutes slipped away. Still addled, Octave gazed foolishly at the two red pin-pricks on the back of his hand. Bob saw the look and laughed the louder.

"Here's what did it," he chuckled, tossing a half-inch staple to the deck at Octave's feet. "Keep it for a souvenir. Bite yourself in the back of the neck with it when you get ready to play the devil your last dirty trick."

Dully Octave saw that the two points of the staple had been filed sharp and bright as twin needles. Bob turned to the crowd.

"Scatter, boys. The show's over," he directed. "I ought to hang this yellow little ducklegger, I know, but——"

He stepped ashore and pushed the gangplank of the *Lady Fair* back aboard. Mounting to the crest of the bank, he cast off the painter by which the stubby little schooner had been made fast.

"I ain't got the heart to do it now," he continued.

Then his voice took on a new edge.

"Howsumever, if you show that messy map of yours anywhere along this neck of the woods again, Octave, I'll see you hung higher'n a buzzard flies, and don't get it into that thick head of yours that I don't mean business. I've got your own confession and about nine million witnesses to prove it on you."

A movement on the after deck of the *Lady Fair* caught his eye. Wide, terror-stricken eyes gazed out at him from a pock-marked little face.

He hauled in quickly on the painter, whose end he had retained in his grasp, and brought the lugger, which had begun to drift lazily out into the Canal, back up against the bank once more.

"Jump out, bub," he commanded. "It'd be a crime to send you along with our ducklegging friend. Jump—that's it."

The boy scrambled ashore.

"We'll take care of you—or something. I know a trapper was askin' me only the other day— Anyway you can't be no worse off, no matter what happens."

He tossed the painter aboard the *Lady Fair*. Placing his foot against the vessel's stubby stem, he pushed, sending the squat lugger slowly out into the Canal.

"Remember, Octave," he called as that ill-starred individual poled the *Lady Fair* about face, pointing her bow once more toward the Gulf, "remember that absence—your absence—makes my heart grow fonder of most any place—this place in particular. *Must* you go? *So* sorry to have had you with us. Well, don't forget to come back and give us a visit—say in about a hundred and eighty years. I wouldn't make it any sooner."

The boatman had disappeared into the cabin, and a moment later the noisy sputter of the *Lady Fair's* gazzoleen engine came across the water.

"Don't go too far, Octave," roared Bob, striving to make his voice carry over the motor's racket and the ever increasing distance. "No farthern'n Yucatan anyway. G'by, Octave! Good—luck—or something!"

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The CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SNAKE-BITE preventive and coral islands. Yet only the other day, J. Allan Dunn was complaining because Florida—particularly its palms—wasn't a real substitute for South Sea island scenery. The trip mentioned in the following, however, sounds interesting.

New York City.

I think it is about time for me to step up to the fire and say howdy. Having been a reader of *Adventure* since 1912. Several times I have tried to pick up courage and join the circle, but although I have tramped and toiled in most parts of this beautiful old world, I have always been backward in introducing myself. Well, here I am anyway and I just want to say that Camp-Fire is the best part of your magazine. I always turn to it first. The manly, straightforward talk, the broadmindedness and kindly spirit exhibited around the fire have led me to love those comrades although, as far as I know, I have never met one of them in flesh.

SEVERAL of the comrades who intend going to South America have been inquiring for snake-bite cures. Well, here is one which was used by a traveler and writer who I think will be remembered by some of the old-timers. I refer to Capt. Mayne Reid. The leaves of a plant, genus Mikania, known popularly in South America as the vejuco de guaco. Take the leaves, chop them up as fine as possible, then tie them tightly in a piece of cloth and press bag until the juice comes through; make incision between fingers and toes, drop juice on wound and rub it with one of the fresh leaves, swallowing the juice. This done, the inoculation is complete. I should have said that this recipe is a preventive instead of calling it a cure.

MIGHT I suggest to some of the comrades who are continually inquiring about the South Sea Islands, that if it is coral islands they want to see, why go to the expense of a long journey to the South Pacific coast when lying within a few miles from the coast of Florida are several hundred of them? Many of the smaller ones have never been explored by white men.

Two or three men in a shallow draft 25 or 35 foot motor boat could spend a few delightful months exploring those wonderful islands and if they want to see gems like Tahiti or Hawaii, sail a little farther south and visit Haiti and Jamaica. Haiti in my opinion is more beautiful than any island in the Pacific ocean. This trip can be made from any port on the east coast and would not be very expensive if a little horsesense were used.

A few years ago a friend and I made a trip in a 20-footer from St. Louis, down around the west coast of Florida and across to Cuba and back up

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through the Bahamas to Jacksonville, where we sold our boat. If I was to tell you how little that trip cost us, well, you would not believe it. At some places we laid up and took a job for a week or two, other times we caught fish and sold them or exchanged them for other food. We had $200 between us when we started our trip and, after selling our boat in Jacksonville, we started for home with $30 each and as happy as if we were millionaires.—PIUTE JACK.

IN OUR May 10 issue we published "As the Spile-Driver Told It," a poem by Frank Parker Stockbridge. That is, we published part of it. By what is probably our record-breaking bone-head play we calmly omitted the last part of it—almost half—and never discovered the omission till too late. Say anything you like—it's all true. And when you've got through we can add something on our own account.

The poem came down to us from the composing-room in two galleys. We lost track of the second one when it came to the mechanical process of making-up our "dummy" for that issue. That's how it happened. There isn't any excuse.

Naturally we owe it to you, to Mr. Stockbridge, to the poem itself and to ourselves to print that poem in full, which we do in this issue.

SOMETHING from Santie Sabalala about his story in this issue.

It will interest many people to know that I am well acquainted with King Lobenguella's son—Inyanmanda—of the right-hand wife, for King Lobenguella had more than eight hundred wives; just exactly what position these numerous wives hold was explained in "In Kaffir Kraals."

The story here, "Umlimo, Lobenguella's Witch-Doctor," has the distinction, I think, of being the only one that has been handed down from one man to another—one kept in the tribal way of keeping history and written down by an African just as it must have been told a hundred or more different times by the old men of the tribe.

Prince Inyamanda was sent down the Rini from (Grahamstown) Buluwayo by the Rt. Hon. Cecil John Rhodes, after the Matabele power was broken as a measure of safety, for there was no knowing what would happen even though Umlimo was dead, if Inyamanda was left up there with his own impi. Inyamanda had a great admiration for Umlimo which amounted to hero-worship.

I often used to listen to him rave about Umlimo with mixed feelings of awe and amusement. He was near by when Umlimo was found dead, and was one of the three *abafan* who drummed out the message of Umlimo's death.

His hatred of Moffat, Jr., the missionary, was hair-raising, as he blamed him for what he called betrayal of trust, and branded him as a Judas. Of the Rev. Mr. Helm, he had nothing to say.

The Rev. Mr. Helm had been a missionary up in Rhodesia, and had acted queerly for both sides during the rebellion. Afterwards, feeling was very high among the white residents, and for sake of mutual peace, strange to relate, he was transferred to the same district where Inyamanda was virtually exiled.

For Cecil Rhodes he had a great respect, because of his personal fairness.

In appearance Inyamanda is tall, about six feet, spare with a swinging stride, a bold cast face with a medium out-thrust chin, a steady mouth, the eyes half veiled with the faraway, sad look in them of the embittered man. The voice is a real induna's voice, full-toned, persuading and naturally commanding.

ONE attempt was made by the warriors of the old régime to resume and place Inyamanda at the head of his tribe.

In the early Spring of 1909, they had journeyed more than fifteen hundred miles.

Native Sunday Schools had just dismissed, and the boys and girls, men and women were going their scattered ways, some with hymn books, bibles and printed tracts under their arms, when round the shoulder of Intabe Zona (Sin Mountain), there burst to view warriors in full fighting force.

They yelled the age old challenge—

"*Umgenel*"

Women yelled and young children screamed as they dropped their hymn books. The boys and men threw away their bibles and shouted joyously, as they dived into the nearest hut to grab a chance stick spear, battle-ax or knobkerry and took off their civilized coats to use them as shields.

I found myself with a finely balanced stick and fenced and thrust at an *umfan* who wielded a rapid kerry. I held my own for about ten minutes and then my antagonist got impatient, for he swung over hard blows toward my head which I parried about five or six times. The next blow came, but my stick was too low and my arm tired. The kerry descended and my stick met it and was knocked out of my hand. The knobbed stick crashed on the top of my head. There came a taste of dry earth in my mouth, and then dull, red darkness.

I DID not come to until late that evening. My mother was bending anxiously over me. She wanted to know how I felt in my head. Before I answered her my hand came in contact with a large, warm, wet bump. I moved my head from side to side to experiment and was very much relieved to find out that I was intact, so to speak. I told my mother I was all right, and asked about the strange warriors.

She told me that they had gone. That they had not come on a raid or anything like that, but merely to rescue Inyamanda and make him king, but were dismayed at the defense put up. This, she told me, was what one of the five of six wounded warriors, who had been left behind by their comrades, said they had come for.

A few days later I saw Inyamanda and asked what he was doing that Sunday afternoon when the Umkosi came. He looked away from me and swallowed hard, and then looked back at me.

"*Mbendi lele*" (I was asleep), he said, and he walked away.

The authorities at Rini never made any kind of a

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move. I really don't think that they had an inkling of what was happening. I have often wondered what would have happened had the coup been successful, if Inyamanda had not been asleep.

Strange, is it not, that all who once have ruled and are exiled—their loyal friends never are able to bring off the coup successful throughout?

THE story of Umlimo and Mosilikatze was checked up by Mr. Greene, after it had been submitted, and it was found that certain persons that Inyamanda spoke of were long past dead, and that like most native princes of blood, he had substituted his father's name instead of his grandfather's.

Lobenguella in native tongue is "Nobengula," but by civilized mouths made to be "Lobenguella." I take no credit for the story, I am merely the agent through which it is put before you. It is to be sincerely hoped you like it.

AS YOU'VE noticed in "Ask Adventure" we now run the "standing matter," the full statement of territory covered by each section, in only every other issue instead of every issue. To save space. Every twenty days is often enough to give you the full data and addresses for all practical purposes. And the new plan gains you a bit more than a page and a half for actual reading-matter. That means over 27 more pages of reading-matter per year. Worth doing, isn't it?

Also, we're now going to gain 24 more pages of reading-matter per year for you by running the "Service Page" in full only once a month. Total gain, 51 pages per year.

Those 51 gained pages won't be divided up according to any regular plan but will be used for more fiction, "Camp-Fire" or "Ask Adventure" as the "make-up" of each individual issue demands. In any case you get 51 more pages of fresh reading-matter in place of repetitions of standing-matter.

SOME of you, anyhow, agree with me as to using dashes in place of cuss-words. Here's a letter from Bill Adams of our writers' brigade:

I've just been reading your long talk upon the question of your custom of substituting dashes where your writers use cuss words.

Well, well, well—

IT IS a bit queer, isn't it, how folks will fuss all about nothing?

Had I been in your place I should have omitted the first two pages of your talk and merely inserted the last paragraph, which exactly fills the bill. There is not one single solitary man in the number of your readers who, if he is honest with himself, won't admit that cussing is after all a fool habit, or a kid habit. I don't want to butt in but I reckon I could, if it would do any good, outcuss any reader you've got.

I learned it from two old Liverpool Irish sailors when I was a ship's apprentice. I learned it so well that the mate used to send for me when the wind fell calm, or when it went ahead, and tell me to go sit on the boom end and swear. I swore once from latitude 2 degrees north to latitude 2 degrees south without using the same word twice. The sea was a mass of dead flying-fish, albacore, bonito, skipjack, and a few sharks. One old and rather weak whale died of it also.

I take no pride in the fact at all.

FOR the love of Mike let the dashes go just as they are.

Those of us who like pepper on our cheese will know how to sprinkle it. The folks who like their cheese unseasoned will be suited also. Any man who can't quickly fill in a dash with the cuss-word he wants hasn't yet reached the time when it is safe for him to leggo the nipple at the end of his milk-bottle and to stand upright.

In writing my stories I use a lot of cuss-words, knowing you will put in a dash. Well and good. Suits me fine.

I cuss not infrequently. But I don't cuss in public. When a man calls me a —— —— fool to my face I say "Sure—I'm wid ye—put it there," not pretending to be anything else.

There's a time and a place for everything—and *Adventure* isn't the place for the sort of language I used when the sea was all humpy with ice and my sea-boots were filled with sea-water. So-long.—BILL.

THE following from R. de S. Horn of our writers' brigade reached the office just in time to meet the letter that follows it here:

Hollywood, California.

I've just picked up a copy of *Adventure* for May 30, including the letter I wrote about radio. As so many amateurs, particularly of the radiophone variety, are getting in these days, perhaps I had better explain just a bit farther.

IN USING the word "broadcasting" I was using the word in the old sense when concerts had not come into being as far as radio was concerned. In those days "broadcasting" was done only by the Government stations in sending storm-warnings and such like, and by ships in distress. In such transmitting it was highly important of course that the type of signal should be such as would reach all types of receiving stations irrespective of tuning. Therefore the "broadcast" signals were sent with a *tight coupling* which gave a very broad wave: a wave that could be detected through a wide range of tuning.

Later on the Government stations began to send out "press news" to all who cared to listen. But this was not done on a tight coupling: the station sent on the prescribed wave-length and any one who wanted to get the press tuned in on that wave.

Now, since department stores and electrical shops give daily concerts to whoever cares to listen in,

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the word *broadcasting* seems to include everything.

I am just send this in to straighten out any readers who may be puzzled over my use of the word "broadcasting." I don't think any of the readers could have gone astray over the meaning of my paragraph though.—R. DE S. HORN.

New York City.

Regarding the letter written by Mr. R. de S. Horn. I would like to take the liberty of correcting some of his statements.

HE STATES that amateurs are restricted to a wave-length of 360 meters, while in reality they are restricted to 200 meters. Battle-ships and commerical stations use a wave-length of from 600 to 800 meters. The higher-powered sets run from 2,500 meters up as high as 25,000 meters. I take particular exception to his statement regarding broadcasting. This term, as used in present day radio work, refers to a station sending out items of general interest, such as music, news, weather reports, etc. They do not use a wave that will register on a receiving set of any wave-length. They are confined to certain wave-lengths, the majority being operated on 360 meters, and they are tuned exceptionally sharp. Mr. Horn is correct in saying that highly important messages, such as distress signals, are allowed to be sent on a broad wave, but the term used in connection with this sort of work is not broadcasting, it is merely known as sending on a broad wave.

I hope you won't think that this is too much of a "kick," but since there are so many people just beginning radio work, it seems to me that they should be set right on terms used for this work.—A. P. PECK, Radio Department, *Science and Invention*.

WE'RE getting some very interesting "dope" on the San Blas from comrades who speak at first-hand:

Santa Isabel, Republic of Panama.

I have read with a great deal of interest the letter from Mr. Verne Victor Barnes in "Camp-Fire" of December 30 regarding the San Blas 18 years ago and I thought it possible that Camp-Fire might like to know something of present day conditions among them. Our plantation is located on Escribano Bay, just on the edge of the San Blas country, and in my various trips down the coast I have come in contact with them a great deal.

THE policy of "Splendid Isolation," which has always contributed somewhat to the mystery of the San Blas country, has been abandoned, and the country has been partially opened up. The turtle fishing, which was formerly the exclusive property or right of the San Blas, has been thrown open by the Government of Panama, and last Spring I was informed by a Canadian trader at Santa Isabel that a number of American and Panamanian schooners had been outfitted for turtle fishing along the coast down there.

Then, the isolation of the women, which has given rise to many legends of their beauty, has been partially abandoned and any day now one can see a San Blas family on the strets of Colon, father, mother and children, walking single file as if along a jungle trail, down Front Street. The hours for remaining ashore at night have been considerably lengthened, I am told, and the women are no longer required to vanish into the houses or the depths of the jungle at the appearance of a stranger.

APPARENTLY they have no sense of honor, or rather honor as maintained among white races, for their sense of wrong-doing seems to lie in being caught, not in the deed itself. Quite often at night, one of their cayucas will attempt to steal water from our tank at Escribano Island, and after securing what they wish will leave it running, so that the entire tank will empty during the night. Anything lying around loose they will have no hesitation about walking off with, right under one's nose.

I am told that the interior San Blas are entirely different from the coast tribes, and still resist most fiercely the entrance of strangers into their country. Almost any one with a little money, a knowledge of Spanish and the ability to beat a born trader at his own game, can amass considerable money in the San Blas country just now, if he will use tact with the natives.—B. B.

HERE'S a look-in from the medical as well as the general point of view:

Camp San Blas, The Navy Club, New York City.

Some one should really start a San Blas anthology, or organize an expedition to that very interesting country, in order to satisfy every one's curiosity. I dread, however, to see adventurers, or others, exploit the country and the people, as they seem to be the only real simple, unaffected race left in the world.

I PUT in the best part of two years amongst the San Blas surveying, and know something of them, and they are all "shipmates," which to a sailor means something. The first year we were in their country they were more or less timid, and it was some months before even the men would come aboard ship and visit us. The second year we were down, men, women and children were aboard almost constantly. The chief, Charlie Robinson, mentioned several times at "Camp-Fire," made regular official calls on the captain, and the old boy was really amusing. Naturally, the captain would give Charlie all the ceremony due to his rank, and although they couldn't talk together—Charlie has Spanish, but no English—used to sit together on the quarter-deck in wicker chairs and look wise together. After a few minutes Charlie would become restless, and after wiggling his feet around a while, would reach down and remove his tan low shoes, after which he was very comfortable. Incidentally, he was the only one of the San Blas I ever saw with shoes on his feet.

JUST a word as to their language. Although I am not expert in it, I learned a little of it and found that they have no adjectives and no personal proper nouns. It is mainly a language of verbs of action and names (common nouns). Some of their phrases and expressions take a number of meanings, as for instance, *igi noogi*, which has a range of meanings, extending from "Hello" to "How much is it," although *nooedi* is regularly used

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for greetings and farewells. Their only conception of money or price seems to be a dollar gold, *alya manya*, and they accept money in proportion to size; e. g., an English penny will buy more than an American quarter. Of course, some are more sophisticated.

We always divided the Indians roughly into two tribes; the island Indians, and the land Indians, which latter we called the Carti tribe. Nearly all the island Indians had freeholds on the mainland which they cultivated in addition to their island property. Another peculiar fact about their property holding was that quite frequently they didn't own a coconut tree on the island on which they lived. Also they would own two or more trees on one island, a few on another, and so on, and they were honest enough to gather nuts only from their own trees.

THEY are an extremely healthy race, although probably dying out slowly from intermarriage, as there is a lot of albinism amongst them. Physically they are a short, stumpy people, with underdeveloped legs, but with massive shoulders and arms, which is explained by their aquatic life, as they are much of the time in canoes (cayugas), or in swimming. Before a child can walk, he can swim. One of their "stunts" is swimming on the back under water; try it sometime. All of the disease has been introduced by the men, who have signed on in schooners and later returned to their country. In this way tuberculosis has been introduced, but as the people seem to have a great natural resistance it doesn't seem to be really transmissible. I didn't see any of the so-called social diseases while there, although I have treated quite a number of the people for various ailments, mostly diseases of the skin. Malaria is not very prevalent among the island Indians, and is usually contracted on the mainland. Most of the children develop an eczematous condition of the face and scalp which responds readily to treatment. Infant mortality is low. The worst ailments I saw came from too intimate contact with the "manchineel" (manzanillo), a thorn prick of this bush causing an abscess which is very painful, and rapidly developes into a gangrenous condition. The abscess causes great sloughing of tissue, and in one case that I saw had almost denuded the elbow joint of all except bone tissue. This condition does not respond to native treatment and usually causes death. Dakin's solution helps it wonderfully.

IN REGARD to the purity of their women it is a tribal law that no woman can place her affections outside the tribe. There was a woman of Rat Village who became enamored of the captain of a trading schooner (a Jamaican negro, "His Majesty's subject" by the way), who swam out to his schooner off the village one night. Upon her return she was seized, bound hand and foot, placed in a cayuga, and sent out to sea. In a short time, of course, the cayuga filled, and tribal law was fulfilled.

Their marriage customs are unique; I suppose ours would be unique to them. The arrangements are made between the elders of the two houses and, if agreeable to both sides, the bride-to-be must undergo a period of purification. She is buried in the ground up to her neck, and a small shack, like a pig-sty, built around her; no one sees her during this period which varies with different women. After the purification the husband is led to her father's house by his friends and relatives. The two are then thrown into a hammock together, whereupon the bride gets up and runs like the ——, bridegroom in pursuit, and allows herself to be caught. This is repeated, and the third time if she runs the wedding is called off. If she remains in the hammock all hands gather around to witness the actual marriage, whereupon modesty draws the curtain. Suffice it to say that it must be proven to every one's satisfaction that the bride is a chaste young woman. So far as I know they have no divorce laws.

I MADE lots of friends among the San Blas, and have been well inland with them hunting alligator, paka, and the three-toed cows that exist in that country. One of my best friends was Joe Davis who lived on the island of "Can," so-called for purposes of survey. Joe possesses two great chests of silver coins, some of them very old, and all with a hole bored in them for stringing on necklaces. Joe Davis once introduced me to his brother, Melvin Foster. Joe's house is typical of all the San Blas—a one room, no-walled cane house, thatched with palm leaves. The furniture consists of a few hammocks, a Singer sewing machine, the two chests of silver, and a palm thatched pig-sty. Of course, there are a few iron pots for cooking bought in Colon or Wilcox's trading station. Joe is also a Christian, therefore he wears the big round virgin gold ear-rings with the cross cut in the upper quadrant. His uniform consists of cotton trousers and shirt, and the ever-present trick Derby. (Incidentally, can any of the people "in the know" tell me who was the Connecticut Yankee that bilked those unsuspecting people into trading for those Lilliputian derbies?) His wife wears a sarong sort of skirt, calico, and a heavy quilted waist, over which she spent days in the making at her Singer, as do the rest of the females of his family. The younger males wear mostly nothing except a grin and some eczema.

And for dinner to-day they will have roast pig *au naturel*, with the small nut taken from the upper ends of coconuts. (This is a hot dish, and resembles paprika, with a bitterish taste.) For other meals Mr. and Mrs. Joe and the little Josephs and Josephines, will have fish, turtle, if they are lucky, or maybe *paka*, which looks like a big wood-rat. Of course, there are always mangoes, alligator pears, fresh pineapples, yams, oranges, and bananas, but the Davises don't care much for such common things. If you want to make a hit with the Davis family bring with you a box of soda crackers or a loaf of white bread. The head of the family is also very fond of chewing tobacco. For properly entertaining them take along your Victrola, and I think they are well camera broken now—they should be after the numerous pictures we took of them—in case you want a permanent record of your visit, and don't forget to give the Davis family a print; they are pathetically fond of their art collection.

IT IS a wonderful country to see. Ask Mrs. Rinehart; she was down there on the *Wilson*. But please don't spoil the people; they are very lovable as they are now. The Wilcox Trading Co. of Colon probably knows more about them than any one, except perhaps the two missionaries—

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ladies from Providence who live in Charlie Robinson's capital, Diablo Village. I might mention also that there is a manganese mine owned by two Americans just inside the Gulf at San Blas point. They employ mostly Panamans and Jamaicans, and when I was there had about sixty men at work. Their only communication with the outside world is by schooner.

Any one wishing to visit the country could go down from Colon via the Republic of Panama's revenue cutter, the *San Blas*, which sails sometimes, by one of Wilcox's launches, or by schooners. If one takes a tent along, he can obtain permission from almost any Indian to camp on his island, *and be perfectly safe*. I was alone, except for one man, for two months on an island taking tidal observations, and was unmolested except for sand-fleas.

I don't claim to be an expert observer, but have just given a little of the lives of these people as I remember them. My memory may be foggy as I have no notes, and it is now five years since I left Panama. The San Blas words I have given are spelt phonetically, they have no written language.

You may do as you please with this, but as so many people seemed to be interested in this small tribe and country, and as I also am much interested in reading others' accounts in the Camp-Fire, and "A. A." I thought I would submit this for what it is worth.

Am at sea on my way home now, after four years in Europe, including the Balkans and Turkey, and will be glad to be in the States once more.—Winslow Robbins, Chief Pharmacist's Mate, U. S. Navy.

SOMETHING about table etiquette and bill of fare among the San Blas:

What Mr. Barnes says is correct. I've lived in Central America—in fact I was born there. I have seen quite a few San Blas Indians, but never a San Blas woman. I know quite a few women that claim San Blas descent. My folks have lived in the San Blas country and have done quite a bit of business with them. Their general height is about five feet, and they have the rottenest style of cooking. When they eat they gorge themselves. They put the intestines of a cow or bull in the fire and as fast as it is cooked they eat. The man of the house will put one end of the intestine in his mouth and will continue eating till he's stuffed.—D. W. R.

SOMETHING from W. E. Brandon, who talked to us the last time, I think from the interior of Haiti:

San Blas Indian Country, Republic of Panama.

This is one of several letters I have started to you and *Adventure*. Can't seem to get them finished. Busy as a one-armed painter with the itch most of the time, and the rest is just pure, unadulterated laziness.

Just got a letter from Tuttle in reply to one of mine from this neck of the woods. He was surprized to find that I am living in the heart of the impenetrable Indian country pertaining to the San Blas Indians. Mentioned the fact that this country had been discussed in Camp-Fire. Suggested writing to you about it. Blame him for this letter.

SAN BLAS is not exactly a healthy country to infest if you haven't a reason. Coast Indians are not at all bad on the face of things, although they are not to be trusted too far. Interior Indians are a different tribe altogether, but have not troubled me so far, nor did they trouble me thirteen or fourteen years ago when I prospected in their country. They did not know I was prospecting, however. But, I mention these things so that you may settle any questions (within reason) which may come up in Camp-Fire about this little known country. Will do the best I can to settle them. The place of my headquarters is at the junction of the Mandinga and the Camgandi Rivers. I am (I imagine) about one hundred miles from Colon, as the crow flies, toward Colombia (if crows fly in that direction). I've been living here for several months and will be here for at least a year more, from indications. May hit your village then, if I decide I can stay on the water-wagon long enough to get there and back.

THAT'S a darn good idea about an *Adventure* exploration party and I hope it goes through. I may be counted in from the start. You have a wonderful chance in that and I sincerely hope it culminates in as wonderful a trip as the chance offers. There are a million places (and I do not exaggerate) where a party could dig up "dope" which would make blamed interesting reading. I agree with another writer that Friel's neck of the woods would furnish enough "prospectus" for at least a dozen parties. I know that country (not exactly the Javary, but the upper Amazon valley) and, if you recall, I wrote a rather rotten yarn about part of it. I quit when I started reading Friel's stuff. He can do the country justice—so far as *any* human can do that inhuman jungle justice. Then there is the Peten district of Guatemala, where the Maya Indian civilization held full sway about the time of our old amigo C. Columbus. That has never been fully explored. Lots of interesting dope to be unearthed there yet. The "back end" of Yucatan. Huh! *hombre*, you could fill an entire yearly issue with interesting stuff from there. I'm not speaking from hear-say in this, either, as you know from my previous record.—W. E. Brandon.

AND a second letter from the same comrade:

Camgandi River, San Blas, Panama.

Your letter of the 16th just got in. Yes, I suppose there will be a lot of 'em call me a liar when I make the assertion that I have been living in the San Blas Indian country for the past seven months. I don't know how I can prove it unless you send the expedition down here to find me. I can promise them a good feed in such a case—wild hog, yam, plantains, etc.

THE place I have my headquarters is at the junction of the Camgandi and Mandinga Rivers, only a few miles from the coast, air line. The Mandinga river empties into the Gulf of San Blas about a hundred miles (guesswork) from Colon—going toward Colombia. A couple of miles up the Camgandi is an Indian village, but most of their towns and villages are near the coast or on keys

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along the coast. I have not had any real trouble with the Indians since I came here—although it takes a little diplomacy not to let them get the best of me at times.

It may not be generally understood that there are two main tribes of the San Blas. One tribe lives on the coast, and the other in the interior. They belong to the same family. Their language is practically the same. A coastal tribesman can talk to one of the interior tribe, but there are differences in words, expressions, etc. They both use firearms when they can get them, but are both proficient in the use of bows and arrows. I have seen no spears among them. They cultivate land, growing corn, yucca, bananas, plantain, rice, etc. Some few have domestic hogs. They hunt a great deal and eat every animal they kill. They are especially fond of the big lizards, iguanas.

IN THE December 30th issue Mr. V. V. Barnes speaks of a visit to their houses. These were the coastal Indians. When he mentions the presents I had to grin. These Indians are the darndest "askers" and "takers" ever born. A present they call *pincha*. *Pincha* also means "perhaps." I take it that they apply the same word to a gift in the sense of "perhaps you'll give me this, or perhaps if you don't perhaps I'll steal the darn thing." They never express thanks for a *pincha*. For something especially fine they might go so far as to grunt *nuedde* (good). They are also persistent in *giving* presents, plantains, corn, etc. They had an epidemic of smallpox since I have been here and one of 'em even gave me a *pincha* of that disease, which wasn't so welcome here a hundred miles from a doctor. I got through it all right though, without greatly marring my peculiar style of classic beauty.

MOST of the Indian men wear ear-rings made of flat discs of gold about the size of a silver dollar, or larger. They are very thin, however. The women wear wrappings of copper or brass wire when they can get it, monkey-tooth beads, ear-rings, nose-rings, and all the finger-rings they can get. Lots of times this is about all they *do* wear too.

I don't want to take all the firelight in Camp-Fire, so I will call a halt on this yarn of San Blas. I could keep blatting away for hours on marriage customs, burial customs, system of taking names, etc., but too much is enough.—W. E. BRANDON.

BE MARKING down your favorite stories for our annual vote by readers on the best stories published in the magazine during 1922. Any one may vote.

SOMETHING from W. C. Tuttle in connection with his complete novel in this issue:

Hollywood, California.

The "Range Boomer" is practically all fiction—that is, the plot. The Devil's Pulpit location was taken from life. It was known as the "Gate to Hell," and is located in the southern part of Bitter Root Valley, Montana. The little cabin in the coulée is located on Sleeping Creek, sixty miles north of the rock.

THE Box M is a description of an old cattle-ranch on the same creek. *Frawley*, *Deal*, *Cleland*, *Wild Moore* and *Jimmy Devlin* are all drawn from life. Yes, *Whitey* was drawn from life, too—that is, the description of him. I knew him for years, but I'll be hanged if I could ever describe his features. I often wondered if I could draw or photograph him.

Klooch was a half-wolf, half-collie, with the wolf strain predominating. She accepted me right off the reel, much to the amazement of her owners. Used to spend hours with me and even licked my hand. They said I was the only person in the world she ever showed any affection for.

I HAVE tried hard to describe real folks, real places, and to make the action true to life. I've worked to make it ring true. I might have worked more action into it, I suppose, and have made *Bud Deal* a murderin' divil; but I wanted a real, honest-to-gosh person, who would do things that any man of his type might do.

I knew *Jimmy* like a brother. He's in the Navy, I think, although I've not seen him for fifteen years. A big, warm-hearted Irishman, good buckaroo, good shot. Aye, and he could sing, too; and his tongue was always ready to admit that the laugh was on him.—TUT.

NO NEED to ask most of you whether you remember the funeral sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. H. W. Knickerbocker over the body of the gambler, Riley Grannan; it's now a question of whether you want us to publish it still another time.

Through the kindness of W. H. Fawcett of the *Whiz-Bang*, Robbinsdale, Minnesota, I learned that the Rev. Mr. Knickerbocker is now preaching in Marlin, Texas, and wrote him. In reply I had a most interesting letter in which he enclosed his greetings to you of Camp-Fire, as I had suggested he might like to do.

Marlin, Texas.

In Rawhide, Nevada, in 1908, I delivered the address over the body of Riley Grannan which has been published twice by *Adventure* under the title "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure and After." The address has been published all over America and I have thought that its popularity was wholly due to Grannan and his phenomenal career. The editor thinks that some folks might be interested in my whereabouts. I have played the mining game in California, 40 miles north of Randsburg, in the Yaqui River basin in Mexico, in Tonopah, Goldfield, Ramsey, Seven Troughs, Bull Frog and Rawhide, Nevada. I made and lost a lot of money and the only money I have left out of what I made in mining is what I gave away.

Would be glad to hear from any of the old-timers.—H. W. KNICKERBOCKER.

ALL he has left is what he gave away. Sort of worth thinking about, isn't it?

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: All issues from March, 1920, to date. Fifteen cents each, plus postage.—Address ED. S. KAHN, 245 Hampden Ave., Narberth, Pa.

WILL SELL: All issues of Jan., July, Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., 1917; all 1918; April, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., 1919; all of 1921. Fifteen cents each. Buyer to pay transportation.—Address H. C. OREN, Elverson, Pa.

WILL SELL: 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, complete and in good condition. Fifteen dollars, carrying charges prepaid. Address GUY S. PECKHAM, 1622 Yahara Place, Madison, Wis.

WILL BUY: All of 1921 up to August 20th., except July 10th., and July 20th. Must be in good condition with covers intact. Write stating price.—Address MERLE SIMMONS, Lillie, La.

WILL BUY: November 10th., December 10th., and December 20th., 1921. Must be in good condition. Write stating price.—Address MRS. E. CORNING, 5 Sudbury Road, Concord, Mass.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails*)

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Assn. of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3. Islands and Coasts
4, 5. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
6. Australia and Tasmania
7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
8. New Guinea
9. Philippine Islands
10. Hawaiian Islands and China
11. Japan
12. Asia, Southern
13—19. Africa. In Seven Parts
20. Turkey and Asia Minor
21, 22. Balkans. In Two Parts
23. Scandinavia
24. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
25, 26. South America. In Two Parts
27. Central America
28, 29. Mexico. In Two Parts
30—36. Canada. In Seven Parts
37. Alaska
38. Baffinland and Greenland
39—44. Western U. S. In Six Parts
45—48. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
49—52. Eastern U. S. In Four Parts
Weapons, Past and Present. In Four Parts
Old Songs That Men Have Sung
Fishing in North America
Mountains and Mountaineering
Standing Information

A Coast-to-Coast Hike

BEFORE you undertake it, send your list of equipment to Mr. Spears for his advice:

Question:—"Five people, including myself, intend to hike to Oregon; starting the end of next May, to be be least four months on the road.

The party consists of a woman of fifty-five, three girls of around the age of twenty, and a boy of twelve. We are all strong and healthy, used to hiking but not used to camping out.

We plan to visit Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, our destination the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

We have obtained all the campers' handbooks of

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regulations pertaining to National parks and forests issued by the Government.

I should be glad to have you answer the following questions:

Will you look over the enclosed list of equipment and make whatever revisions are necessary?

How heavy a load could we adults carry comfortably?

What is the average speed made in a day by inexperienced hikers with such a load?

Would it be advisable to carry a topographical map, or is an automobile road map better? Can a topographical map be obtained showing a small section of the country?

What would be the best route to follow?

About how much money would be required for food and incidentals on such a trip, not including the equipment?

How many days' rations is it necessary to pack?"

—(Miss) Dorothy Buckmaster, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Your list of equipment for your proposed trip to Oregon is nearly what I should recommend. I think, however, I can make some suggestions which will help you. I reckoned up the total weight, which is about 140 pounds. This means 28 pounds to each pack, average—the boy of twelve will probably carry 20 pounds comfortably.

Until you pass the Mississippi River at St. Paul (Yellowstone Trail) you need not burden yourself with to exceed two days' rations, and these would be emergency. Villages, gardens, farms, all along the way, would enable you to cut food to the minimum. I don't think I should change from normal home rations, but go on eating about the usual food, working in the dehydrated and similar food only for emergencies.

Beyond the Mississippi both food and water will be problems. Water all along the way must be carefully considered, however, since wells are often contaminated, brooks never to be used for drinking, etc.

You mention cartridge-belt, but no firearms; a .22 caliber rifle, and a light, single-barrel shotgun, 12 gage—I like a 36-gage Harrington & Richardson which I use, good to 20 or 25 yards on small game. I presume you will carry long-barreled .32 caliber revolvers, too.

I know thousands wear Army breeches, knickerbockers, etc., but I know, also, that there is no need of these. My experience touring is that women as a rule state that skirts with long hems reaching below the knees are better for hiking, automobile touring, camping, all things considered, including comfort.

All the authorities agree on the light woolens—Army especially. I should, however, add light, inexpensive cotton skirts, and a suit of cotton underwear. There will be rivers, lakes, streams, for bathing, too, and possibly suits for this emergency might be added.

Your ponchos will serve for tent-flies. Have fork with 15 or 18 inch handle (ten-cent store). Add jack-knives with two blades, or a 3 or 3½ inch blade. You can save five pounds by carrying two small, plain grids, with flattened stovepipe iron wired to tops.

Keep heavy walking-shoes tapped and heeled—half an inch thick at least.

Add sewing-kits, needles, thread, thimbles, patching.

Look over carbid lights. Battery lights are expensive illumination. You can obtain a good oil lantern, caarying it full all the time; no better camp light than oil lantern. Carry box of matches in waterproof container, baking-powder can, say, wrapped in bit of waterproof canvas, oiled silk, etc. Use flash merely for emergency.

Carry five-quart canteens instead of four—one for each member.

Instead of sweater, let me suggest a tight woven woolen shirt of same weight, made over into a long blouse. Sweaters hold enormous quantities of water in rain. The woolen shirt can be made watertight with waterproofing—get them oversize.

Powdered alum, 4 oz.; sugar lead, 4½ oz.; dissolved in 3 gals. water, stirred twice a day for two days; when perfect subsidence has taken place, pour off clear liquid only, and add to it 2 dr. isinglass, previously dissolved in warm water, taking care to mix thoroughly. Steep garment in this mixture for six hours, after which hang up and dry. Don't wring.

That is woolen cloth waterproofer's recipe. There are many others.

Castor-oil dressing for the shoes after every wetting is as good as anything.

Better go to the public libraries and look over the camping books for advice of Horace Kephart, Col. Miller, and other experts. Boy Scout Book is one you can obtain in any book store, and it should be thoroughly studied. Kephart's and Miller's camping-books will give you numerous kits. You will save much by studying camping theoretically from all books you can obtain at libraries, an hour a day, several times a week—regular reading and discussion classes.

Now as to general propositions. Thirty pounds is near the maximum weight you should start with. Less if possible. Later you can go to 35 or 40, perhaps, but probably won't need to.

For maps, State road maps. Topographical of no use to you. But write U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D. C., for index sheet covering whatever locality you are interested in, as National Parks, Willamette Valley, etc.

I should suggest that you figure on 5 to 7 miles a day for first ten days, and no more. Stop one day a week for mending, resting, loafing, readjusting. The first month will be the hardest and most discouraging. Take care of the feet—rubbing with dry soap, castile, Ivory, etc., each night will help you. Don't let blisters and chafes go, but treat them according to first-aid methods. Study up Army methods of care of men on the march.

I have been over the route from Fort Lee (126th St. Ferry, N. Y. City) to Greenwood Lake, N. J., and west *via* Port Jervis, Lackawaxen, Binghamton, Elmira, through to Buffalo. I rode a bicycle. It is your best route.

From Buffalo, along the south side of Lake Erie (keep to the shore road) west, not following the main road, which is several miles south of the lake. Cleveland, Sandusky, Toledo are on your way.

The road from Toledo to Chicago is your best then—there are several parallel—and beyond Chicago bear into the Yellowstone Trail to St. Paul, and west on the Yellowstone Trail to Yellowstone River Park, and on to your destination.

Expenses are hard to figure. You can find out by keeping exact record of food expenses now. I suggest you make a menu for two weeks—meat,

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vegetables, the simple fare of the trail—and eat it during that period, meal for meal. That is, morning and night, or whatever meals you can arrange to try this. You can thus figure eating costs. I lived seven months on $125—every expense, including a $24.50 boat, a few extra clothes, etc. You can, by eating the local inexpensive dishes, cutting out imported foods, buying at farms, orchards, gardens, do better by half than in town.

I would figure on $2.50 a day, at least. If you allow $5 a day, and then cut every corner, you may get through on 30 cents a day each, or $1.50. It is like all traveling—a sick member may add the unexpected unknown factor. People in automobiles travel for weeks on very little, then something smashed adds $10 a week to a year's journey.

People have done exactly what you contemplate doing. The most I ever did was 1,000 miles straightaway, then 600 or so in a skiff, home by boat and train, 4,000 miles or so, round trip. I think you can make 10 to 15 miles average after the first two weeks if you take care of your feet and don't overdo to start with.

You look forward to 3,000 miles' walk, isn't it? That means 25 miles a day for four months. Don't try to do it in less than 200 days, net, say seven months. This doesn't allow much time for hundreds of miles of side trips into the parks.

Suppose you save yourselves some anxiety by walking to Buffalo; take steerage there in a passenger steamer, to Duluth—second cabin, say, or on a freighter; then walk from Duluth to Minneapolis. Mile for mile, this will save you money.

Get a second-hand fliver somewhere along the way, put good tires on it—$200 or so—and ride the Yellowsone Trail, see the parks, etc. I've been over those Western roads—the Yellowstone Trail nearly to Montana. Unless you know that country, you have no idea of the houses five, ten, thirty miles apart, towns farther apart through the Rockies, deserts, wilderness, and water in places unobtainabl for fifty or a hundred miles. Seventy miles from house to house on one main road in Montana. I drove coast to coast—you buy water in some places, fresh every week, brought in on the train!

If you buy a bargain flivver, drive it 2,000 miles and sell it, you'll get your money back, perhaps more, and nothing out but gasoline, oil and tires. You are in weeks of time. You ride 80 miles a day instead of walking 15 miles. And the cost of food for those extra days will buy the gasoline for a second-hand Ford that gives you 15 or 20 miles a gallon.

If you walk to Buffalo, you will have had experience in making and breaking camps, in all the road emergencies. You will then be ready to make the flivver tour with the same equipment, as economically in a month as you could do your walk in the six months to follow, even though you rolled from Buffalo to the Columbia River instead of from Minneapolis.

In Detroit you can pick up a good car cheap—for example. Or in Toledo, or in Chicago. Beyond Chicago prices are higher, car for car.

I don't want to interfere with your plans. I just make the suggestion that you think over what I suggest, in view of the size of the undertaking ahead of you, and the dilemma you confront, in nearly three thousand miles of highway, and the wintry mountains and deserts that would lie ahead of you after six months' walking, however steadfast and successful your daily journey.

Not knowing your idea, your circumstances, the outlay to be made, I can only offer suggestions blindly. I think it would cost five of you in the neighborhood of $600 to walk to Oregon—seven months, minimum. This would allow $200 for a flivver, $400 for expenses—$75 a week for five weeks, which would be fair flivver time. It took the Brooklyn auto emigrant train two months to make their trip. Perhaps you could do the walk on $400—$80 each—but I don't see exactly how.

In any event a walk to Oregon is an enormous undertaking; and without impeding your progress—being wholly in sympathy with the undertaking—I want to give you my best assistance toward making the adventure a perfect success. Leave your plans open for amendment—walk to Buffalo and make the whole distance, stage by stage, taking care of opportunities to amend your plans according to your experience.

If I can help further, come again.

Names and Addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each department are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

A Trading Trip to Borneo

IT HAS its possibilities. And anyway the hunting alone seems to be worth going there for:

Question:—"Three young fellows including myself are thinking of going to Borneo. We will have about five hundred dollars apiece. Do you think that will be enough?

How is trading there? We are not afraid to take a chance. In fact that is why we are going there.

What kind of rifles should we take along? Also what provisions and other things needed for the trip?

I have heard about the head-hunters there. What are their customs?

What about the minerals?"—Wm. Gutzke, Cleveland, O.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—I think that with fifteen hundred dollars above your fares, and a little pluck, you are equipped for a trading venture, though whether you make a success of it depends upon yourselves—and luck. As I remember it, the trade is pretty largely in the hands of the Chinese merchants, who despatch their agents to the interior to attend the fairs—the recognized places of barter. However, there is nothing to hinder you having a shot at it. Doubtless you can strike a bargain with the Chinese.

There is oil in Sarawak, British North Borneo. Gold has been found in alluvial deposits on the banks of some of the east-coast rivers, though in no great quantity. I scarcely think that you would be interested in coal. Considerable is exported, however.

There is no necessity to take along either the rifle of heavy caliber or the modern extremely high-velocity arm. Rhino and elephant are practically extinct; you will encounter nothing more formidable than orang-utangs (protected), tigers (small, not the Bengal), small panthers, Malay honey bears,

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several species of deer, large pythons, crocodiles and numerous small venomous snakes.

You will require, then, a small, light arm of medium caliber, and I believe you can not do better than take along the Savage Featherweight in .30-30 or .303 caliber. These cartridges can be obtained almost anywhere. However, as exchange favors American currency, take a goodly quantity of cartridges along; you will just about break even with the customs.

For a side arm I would take the Single Action Colt's .45, with a 6-inch barrel. A twelve-gage shotgun is a handy weapon to have along; for pheasants, pigeons, doves, partridges, snipe, quail and parrots abound.

When you finally decide to go, write to me, and I shall be glad to suggest an outfit.

The Coast Dyaks are friendly people. You would have to penetrate a long way into the interior to run across really hostile natives.

The principal articles of barter are rubber, tobacco, coal, cutch, camphor, gum damar, fish, edible birds' nests, rattan, mangrove bark and timber.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

A Five-Masted Schooner's Sticks and Canvas

TOGETHER with a few words as to the largest sailing-ships afloat:

Question:—"Perhaps you would answer the following few questions. Please write on paper I enclose. I enclose stamped, and self-addressed envelope.

1. What are the principal masts, spars and sails of a five-masted schooner?
2. What is the largest sailing-vessel ever built? What are her dimensions and rig? Tonnage? Size of crew? When built?
3. How long would it take a man to qualify as captain of an ocean-sailing vessel if he started as a seaman at the age of 20? Is there any hope for the sailing-vessel?
4. What are the present-day wages of a master of a sailing-vessel? Of a mate and able seaman?"—P. HERRE, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—There are differences in the names given to the two after masts of a five-masted schooner. As a general rule, however, they are designated from forward aft as: Fore, Main, Mizzen, Spanker and Jigger. The spars are the bow-sprit and jib boom, forward, then each mast in turn. On each mast there is a boom and gaff, with the names of the mast as "the main gaff" or boom, as the case may be. The sails forward are the staysail, jib and flying jib, usually; although some schooners carry a number of other head sails of different names. Each mast has a lower sail and a topsail, each carrying the names of the mast as "the main sail" or the "main topsail." There are also staysails, between the masts, each carrying the name of the stay on which it is hoisted, as "the main topmast staysail."

I can not tell you the names of the largest sailing-vessels ever built. As I am informed, the largest sailing-vessels now afloat are some of the wooden vessels built during the war period and intended primarily as steamships, but which have been sold for a song and rigged as five or six-masted schooners. Their dimensions are considerably greater than those of any of the old-fashioned square-rigged vessels of former days.

A man starting as a seaman at the age of 20 could qualify as master by the time he was 25 or 26. It is a disputed question whether the sailing-vessel will survive, and any answer would be a mere matter of guesswork or of opinion. Masters of sailing-vessels get up to $250 a month. Mates range around $150 to $175 a month, and seamen $75.

The Spirit of the North

HERE'S an inquirer who didn't know what he was up against when he wrote the subjoined letter:

Question:—"I am thinking of taking a hike by myself around the States this Summer, but I would rather go up north through the big-timber sections in Canada. What I want to know is this: Can a tenderfoot—I call myself one although I have had four years of experience camping in all kinds of weather but never where I could be lost—hike from Chicago to Canada through Canada up to Dawson, Alaska, without losing his way if he keeps his eyes open?"—CLARENCE MALLON, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I know you will pardon my frankness if I speak to you just as I would to my own little boy if he happened to be ——bent and determined to make a dum fool of himself. You can hike from Chicago to Canada without any trouble; but even when you get to Canada you are still a long way from Edmonton, Alta., which wuld be your point of departure for Dawson—*Yukon Territory*, not Alaska. By the time you reached Edmonton you would have used up about all of the Summer there was to spare unless you are a whole lot better hiker than your letter indicates. By this I mean you would sure get lost a number of times owing to your inability to follow plain, printed directions.

Read the instructions to inquirers in "Ask Adventure" and then ask yourself why you sent your letter to the main office instead of direct to me, why you did not enclose a stamped, addressed envelop and several other whys. I have pardoned all these mistakes; but the North makes no allowance for blunders. She generally kills the man who makes them, and by slow and painful methods at that. Failing the extreme penalty, she starves him, cripples him, blinds him and does all sorts of unpleasant things to him.

If you will read up the history of the Edmonton Trail you will learn that a well-equipped expedition of Mounted Police spent nearly two years in making the hike over which you propose to romp so merrily with your both bright but unobserving eyes wide open, and considered themselves lucky to get through at all. Honest, Clarence, I don't believe you could make it, especially by yourself. Of course you might do it; but I would really hesitate about advising you to try it.

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Come out here to the coast and I will show you plenty of pretty hikes that will answer your purpose just as well as the suicidal trip you have proposed.

Mr. Carson's letter might have peeved some inquirers, but it had the opposite effect on this one; for he writes his informant the following appreciative reply:

"I received your letter and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your answer. I admit it. I am a dum fool for ever thinking of hiking up to Dawson. I just got a crazy notion that it could be made; but thanks to you for waking me up.

You sure have service. I didn't expect to hear from you for a couple of months. The reason I sent the letter to New York was that I couldn't find your address in *Adventure*.

Thanks for forgiving me for the bulls. Enclosed you will find ten cents in stamps for the stamped envelop I didn't send you. Gee, I sure am a dumbbell. Thanks for inviting me out to the coast. I'll never show my head around Washington after what I was guilty of doing."—CLARENCE MALLON, Chicago, Ill.

The above letter brought out further interesting sidelights from on old sourdough on mushing in the arctic:

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—If they would all take my well-meant albeit somewhat sarcastic advice as sportingly as you have done this would be a much nicer job to hold down. You can go a long way with the disposition you have.

Just a little reminiscence of arctic travel. Two of us were ascending a rather small but deep and swift river when we came to a point of rock that jutted into the stream, its sides practically perpendicular. It blocked us for that trail good and plenty. In order to pass that point we had to make a détour of over seven miles and climb several thousand feet of perfectly devilish rock formation. Also, owing to trail difficulties we had to split our packs; that is, take one-half over and make the second trip. Three days of almighty hard work advanced us not more than five hundred yards on our journey. Now ask yourself what chance would a chechako have had?

I am asked questions which seem to me as ridiculous as though some one came to your city and wanted to know if the street-cars ran out to Lincoln Park or if it was necessary to walk. Do you wonder I wax sarcastic at times?

I am sincere in asking you to come to the coast. You would see much and learn a lot. There is plenty of work for the willing man at fair wages, and no doubt in time you would get a chance to take a trip into the wilderness with a surveying-party or in some such connection which would permit you to see the country without expense to yourself.

There are some swell locations for homesteads in British Columbia that should appeal to a red-blooded man, so if you feel that you would like to see the country where the roses bloom till Christmas and we can see snow the year round, come ahead, and I will be surprized if we don't become pretty good friends.

Getting Set for Swift Shooting

THIS inquirer wants something better than a shoulder holster; but apparently, judging from Mr. Wiggins' answer, "there ain't no sech animile." . . . And does anybody know what "the hidden draw" is?

Question:—"I greatly desire to learn more of the hidden draw, especially concerning a .32 police model six-gun, which is uncomfortable in the hip pocket. I also dislike the shoulder holster with the breast straps. I trust you know far better methods for slinging a concealed gat than I."—D. W. AVIS, Camden, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I do not know of any method known as the "hidden draw" for getting a revolver into action quickly, but will suggest the following methods for your use.

Secure a spring holster, made by a number of firms, of whom I know the following to be perfectly competent and reliable: A. H. Hardy, Denver, Colo.; Heiser Holster Co., Denver, Colo.

They are very good for quick work, as the revolver is jerked straight to the fore, instead of having to be lifted from the holster. I have seen some very good and fast shooting done in this manner.

Wear one of these holsters under your vest, the strap passing under one armpit, around the other shoulder, and back to the holster, thus being invisible. Have the buttonholes of your vest worked with silk thread, and small round buttons used; thus the vest can be jerked open in a flash, and the revolver pulled with the least possible loss of time.

Most people wear the shoulder spring holster merely under the coat, but you seem to desire all the concealment possible. So I recommend the above method.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Fishing the Cumberland River

ALTHOUGH Mr. Liebe is writing from Florida, he hailed before that from the Cumberland country; and, being an enthusiastic fisherman—then as now—you can depend on it that he knows how to take 'em out of the Tennessee streams:

Question:—"I am asking some information regarding the game fish that inhabit the Cumberland River and creeks around Nashville. I want to find out about the live bait and flies that are best used to catch them.

How would you fish for trout and bass in the Cumberland River? Wouldn't around the locks be the best place? Please give me such information as you can on the subject and I will sure appreciate it. If there is any charge I am willing to pay it."—JESSE GILLIAM, Nashville, Tenn.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—For Summer fishing try swift, shallow water, and little eddies behind boulders

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or logs. Trout will take flies of different colors on different days; also, they will take angleworms and pine-worms; flies are not a success, usually, either with trout or bass, unless the water is pretty clear. Bass take live minnows best in Summer; but minnows that have no very "sticky" fins should be used. In September the fish begin to go into deep water again, and then both live minnows and crawfish are good for bass.

In fishing for bass with live bait I let them take the second run as a general thing; the idea being that they stop to swallow the bait and then start off again. I know some good fishermen, however, who strike the fish on the first run and claim it gets them as well as to wait.

Around a lock or a dam is nearly always a good place to fish, and especially in the Spring when the fish always begin to work up-stream; naturally they gather at any barrier, though bass and trout will go over some pretty steep ones.

In bait-fishing I never use a sinker if I can get around it, or a click on the reel. Sinkers and clicks are that much for the fish to pull, and a lot of times they'll get suspicious and drop the bait.

I believe this answers your letter. There is no charge. The magazine pays for this.

Hierba Mate

IT'S a South American hot drink—Eighteenth Amendment not involved:

Question:—"1. I would like to obtain some *Maté* (*Yerba Maté*).

2. Do you know where it can be procured in this country and its approximate value in hundred-pound lots or larger, either in leaf or powder form?

3. What proportion is it used ordinarily as a beverage?

4. How much boiling would be required to exhaust all the soluble content of the *Maté*?"—LOUIS E. PORTNOY, Cincinnatti, Ohio.

Answer, by Dr. Goldsmith:—1. I think you can obtain *hierba mate* (not *yerba maté;* nobody but a North American ever writes the name of the plant thus; there should be no accent on the "e") as it is correctly called in Spanish, or *herva matte* (the Portuguese form and applied usually to the Brazilian product) by writing for the former to the Consul-General of Paraguay, Mr. William Wallace White, Woolworth building, New York; or for the latter to Dr. Helio Lobo, Consul-General of Brazil, 17 State Street, New York.

2. You can gather information as to the cost in large lots from either of these gentlemen. I think, however, it would be rather difficult to secure in large quantities in this country at present.

3. The beverage is made by pouring hot water (not boiling) on the crushed leaves, which have been placed in the *mate*, a vessel of gourd, wood, silver or gold. After the decoction stands for a few minutes, one drinks the beverage through a *bombilla*, which is a tube, usually of metal, the bottom of which ends in a sort of hollow, perforated spoon. The beverage is thus strained through this tube.

The quantity of *hierba* used in proportion to the water is about twice as great as that of ordinary tea used, but the water is usually poured on a number of times as fast as the decoction is drunk.

4. As to how much boiling would be needed to exhaust all the soluble contents of the *hierba*, I can say nothing. No Paraguayan, Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean or Peruvian ever boils *hierba mate*. I assume that very little boiling would be required as my experience leads me to believe that the *hierba* gives up its soluble contents very readily.

Palestine

ZIONISTS, ahoy! Only about ten per cent. of the Hebrew homeland's population are now Jewish:

Question:—"Would you kindly let me know how big is Palestine, also where located, also what is its present population and about what it was in Christ's time, also by whom is it inhabited now."—R. BRUNSTETTER, Shamokin, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Binda:—Palestine is part of Syria, which is the extreme western part of the continent of Asia, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. At present Palestine is administered by the British, and has an area of about 9,000 square miles, whereas under the Turks it had an area of 13, 724 square miles. The present Palestine includes only that part of the historic Palestine which lies to the west of the river Jordan. Its present population is given as 647,850, of whom 515,000 are Moslems, 65,300 are Jews, 62,500 are Christians and 5,050 other races.

I am sorry that I have been unable, after consulting many authorities, to find what was the population in the time of Christ, and therefore am unable to answer that question.

How Basutos Count

WHY "six" and "ford" should have a common derivation seems puzzling at first; but Captain Franklin makes the reason as clear as crystal:

Question:—"I read in *Adventure* magazine that you are prepared to answer questions regarding South Africa. At our club here I have been asked what is the connection between a ford in a river—"drift" is the South African word—and the figure six (6). This was stated to be a question that a South African should be able to answer, but I must confess myself beat. Perhaps you may be able to help me."—H. J. HARRIS, Mohalies Holk, Basutoland, So. Africa.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—The question you give involves a knowledge of native practises of some interest. The Basuto word for "six"—*tseletsing*—is the same as that for a drift or ford and is derived from the verb *tseletse*—to cross. When a Basuto counts he holds up the two hands, palms outward, and begins with the little finger of the left hand, counting each digit as a numeral. Six is the crossing over from the left to the right hand and is represented by holding up the right thumb only.

It is a common mistake for a stranger to think that a native means one when he holds up the index finger of the right hand. This represents seven, and the index finger of the left hand represents four.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

745 Riverside Drive, New York

Comrade Ralph Bertucelli, of Chicago, wants to know who wrote a poem called "Beyond," of which the first verse follows. It's a new one on me, although I must say it sounds mighty familiar:

"The reason I never can quit the road is a reason that's plain and clear.
It's because no matter where I may be, and whether it's far or near,
There's always a place beyond the place wherever I may be at,
And then beyond is a place beyond, and the world beyond all that."

Maybe the following by Robert W. Service will fill the bill. It has a very fetching lyric quality to it and I venture it will "get" to the members of the Camp-Fire. I found it in Service's "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone," published by Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc., New York.

The Land of Beyond

Have ever you heard of the Land of Beyond
That dreams at the gates of the day?
Alluring it lies at the skirts of the skies,
And ever so far away;
Alluring it calls: O ye the yoke galls,
And ye of the trail overfond,
With saddle and pack, by paddle and track,
Let's go to the Land of Beyond!

Have ever you stood where the silences brood,
And vast the horizons begin,
At the dawn of the day to behold far away
The goal you would strive for and win?
Yet ah! in the night when you gain to the height,
With the vast pool of heaven star-spawned,
Afar and agleam, like a valley of dream,
Still mocks you a Land of Beyond.

Thank God, there is always a Land of Beyond
For us who are true to the trail;
A vision to seek, a beckoning peak,
A farness that never will fail;
A pride in our soul that mocks at a goal,
A manhood that irks at a bond,
And try how we will, unattainable still,
Behold it, our Land of Beyond!

Another Adventurer who's too modest to have his name published wants to find a song that begins with the line, "'Twas Autumn—the Indians came treading," supposed to celebrate a nifty little custom the Iroquois Indians used to have of compelling their captured enemies to take a running broad jump over Niagara Falls; only this time it was the chief's daughter that got the bell without her respected parent being advised in advance—and it just sort o' busted up the custom. Heaven only knows who put it into verse—I don't. Come through, you songsters; I'm getting hoarse.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

STARKE, JAMES ELBERT. Age thirteen years. Disappeared from his home October 27, 1921. Dark, sallow complexion, light-brown eyes, straight sandy hair. Very talkative. Fond of horses, boats and the water. Father will not punish. Any one knowing his whereabouts, kindly communicate with his mother.—Address MRS. W. E. STARKE, Box 1554, Buena Vista Sta., Miami, Florida.

FOWLER, M. R. Your buddy would like to hear from you. Write, giving your address.—Address FRED GILBERT, 3113 Burt St., Omaha, Nebraska.

DAVIS, F., also known as Mutt, and George Hindale known as Canary. Was with them at Newport Naval Training Station, in 1909, also on the Pacific Coast from 1917 till 1920. Please write.—Address DAN, 742 S. Warren St., Trenton, N. J.

MEYER, PAUL F. Was on police at Ft. Hanison, Ind. Five feet ten inches, brown eyes and hair, age twenty-six years. Any information will be appreciated.—Address H. D. MEYER, Rome, Kentucky.

CLEVELAND, EDWARD or HARRY. Edward last heard of in Australia. Need you to complete inquiry for estate in England. Please communicate with your nephew.—Address FRANK P. CLEVELAND, 1008 Aschener St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

CLARK, EDWIN E., of Buffalo, N. Y. and Huntington Park, California. Tuscania Post, No. 174, of American Legion and your relation would be glad to hear from you.

COLLINS, CARTER. Last heard of in Alberta, Canada. He moved there from Rockhouse, Ky., some time in the eighty's. Was born in Letcher County, Ky. Age about sixty years. Any information will be appreciated by his cousin.—Address J. L. THOMAS, Whirlwind, West Virginia.

WOULD like to hear from MARTIN PURCELL and THOMAS QUIGLEY, last heard of at Tampico, Mexico, in January, 1921.—Address MRS. T. J. MCKEON, 1637 Broadway, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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DENHAM, WALTER E. Was at Seattle, Washington, about 1918. Any information will be appreciated.—Address Pvt. RAYNNIE E. BRATTON, Co. G., 18th Infantry, Camp Dix, N. J.

"HAPPY." Letters addressed to you at last address returned. Write me.—Address J. M. SHAMBLIN, 2815 Austin St., Houston, Texas.

SPENCER, EARL (Kid). The party that made the trip to the coast with you last Fall, would like to hear from you. Can explain anything of which you may have doubts. Have something on for this Summer.—Address F. J. MILLER, 2505 A St., Lincoln, Nebraska.

KENNER, A. W. Your old Buddy would like to hear from you.—Address F. J. MILLER, 2505 A St., Lincoln, Nebraska.

ANDERSON, CHARLES. Formerly of Sunbeam and Lily, Colorado. Age about forty-three. May be in South America. Former ship's carpenter. Your pal Bob wants to hear from you.—Address BOB GRAM, Box 152, Newton, Kansas.

RASMUSSEN, HOLGER. Last heard from March 17, 1907, in Omaha, Nebraska. May be in San Francisco, Cal. Any information would be appreciated by his brother. —Address HJALMAR V. RASMUSSEN, 1030 St. Ferdinand St., New Orleans, La.

CUNNINGHAM heirs of Boston, Mass., can be located by writing to J. C. HARRISS. 911 Fournier St., Ft. Worth, Texas.

THE following have been inquired for in either the July 10th or July 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine:

ALLEN, JOSEPH C.; Brandon, W. E.; Bunch, William S.; Daneker, John Lee; Dickard, Vernon; Harper, Chas. E.; Harty, William; Hough, T. J. (Tom); Humiston; Hunt, Robert; Jakubovsky, Joseph and Vidikovsky Kasimir; Kimmis, Bruce; Keenan, William; Kelly, Francis, A.; Kenny, D. W.; Livingston, Sam. L.; Murphy, Thomas; Joseph; Parker, Willie, Larater; Patterson, Tom; Patterson, Frank; Perry, Ernest Leslie; Ritey, Rigard P.; Schmidt, A.; Shatto, Powers; Stapler, Capt.; John R.; Stevenson, Pvt. Fred; Storks, Frances Havens; Thompson, Clarence Lee; Thornton, Walter; Tisdale, Clark; Updegraff, Pvt. Frank.

MISCELLANEOUS—Descendants of Desire Bourgeois, John. Would like to hear from Col. Muerling of the 2nd C. M. C. G. Bde. regarding some photos; 9628.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

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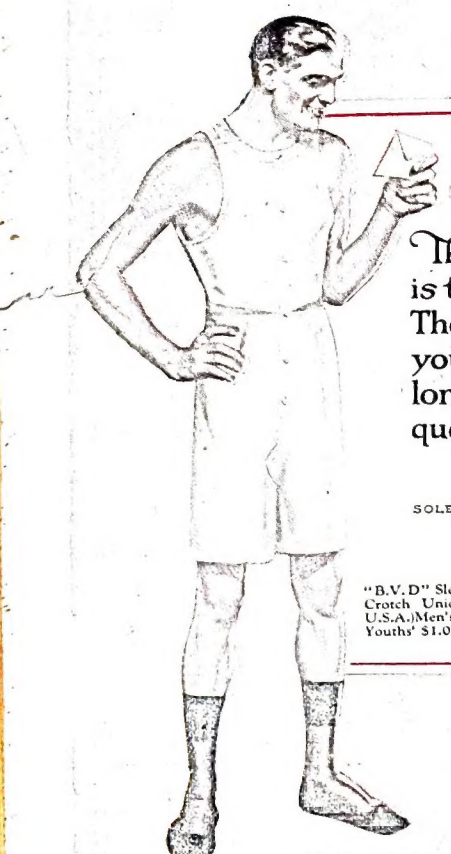

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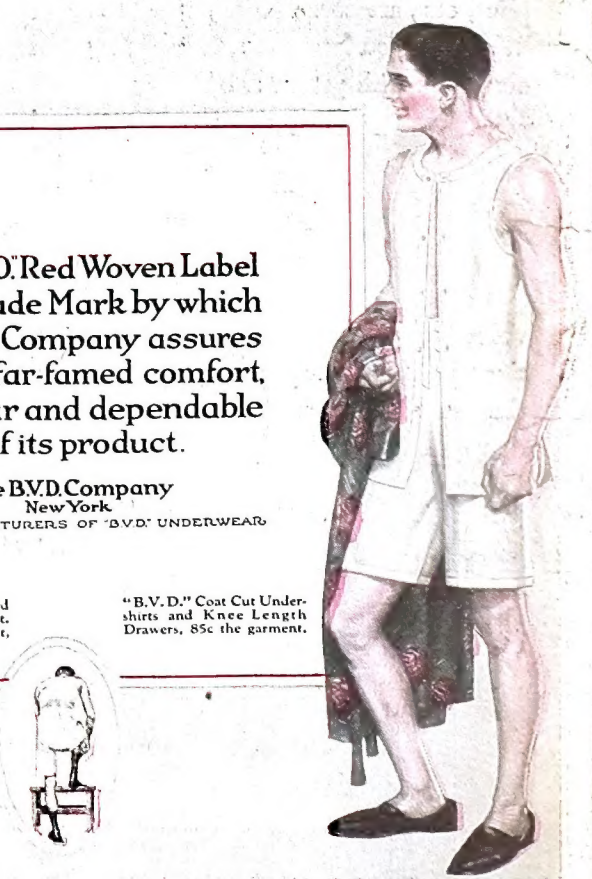

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